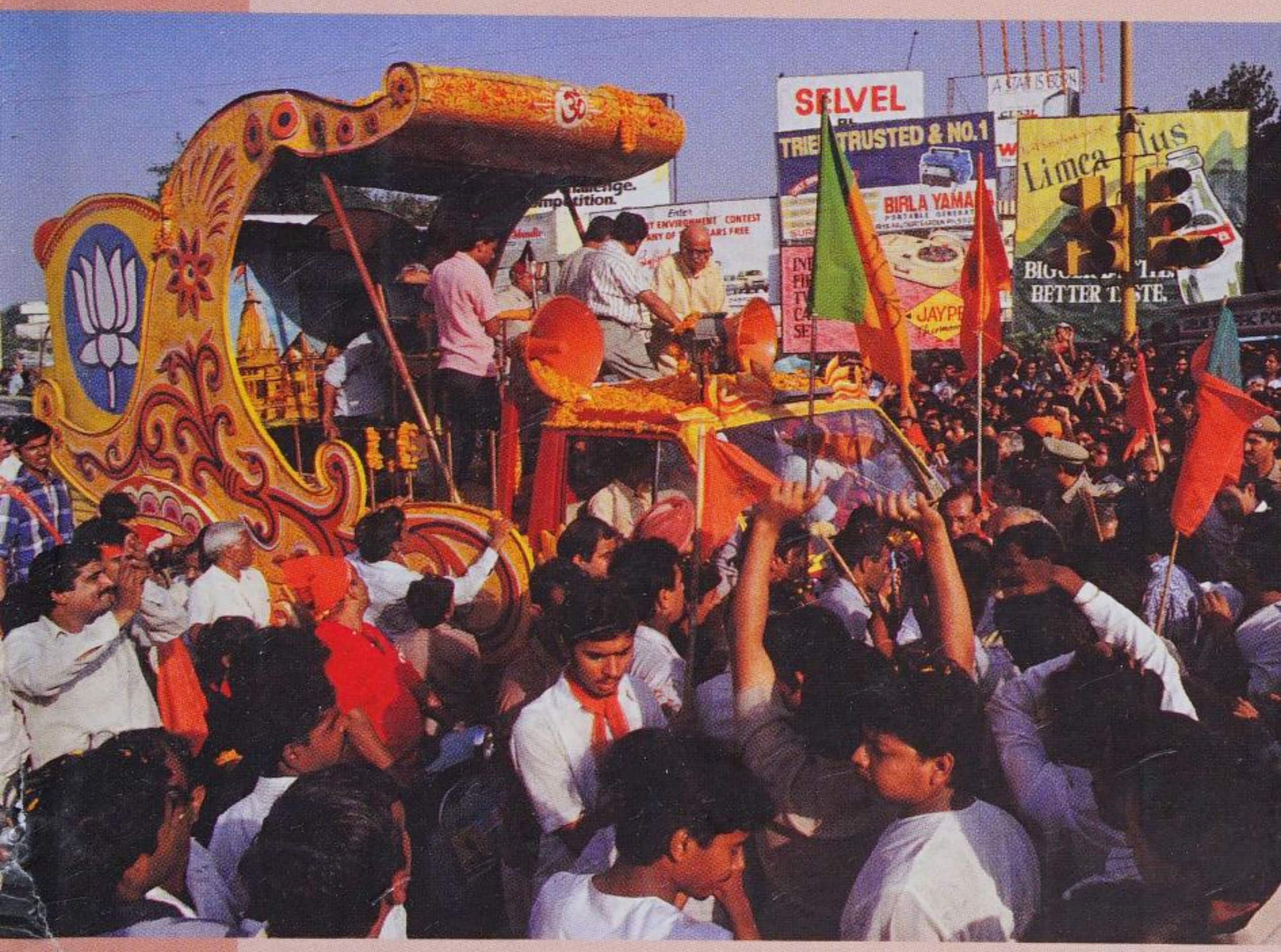
Themes in Politics

PARTIES AND PARTY POLITICS IN INDIA



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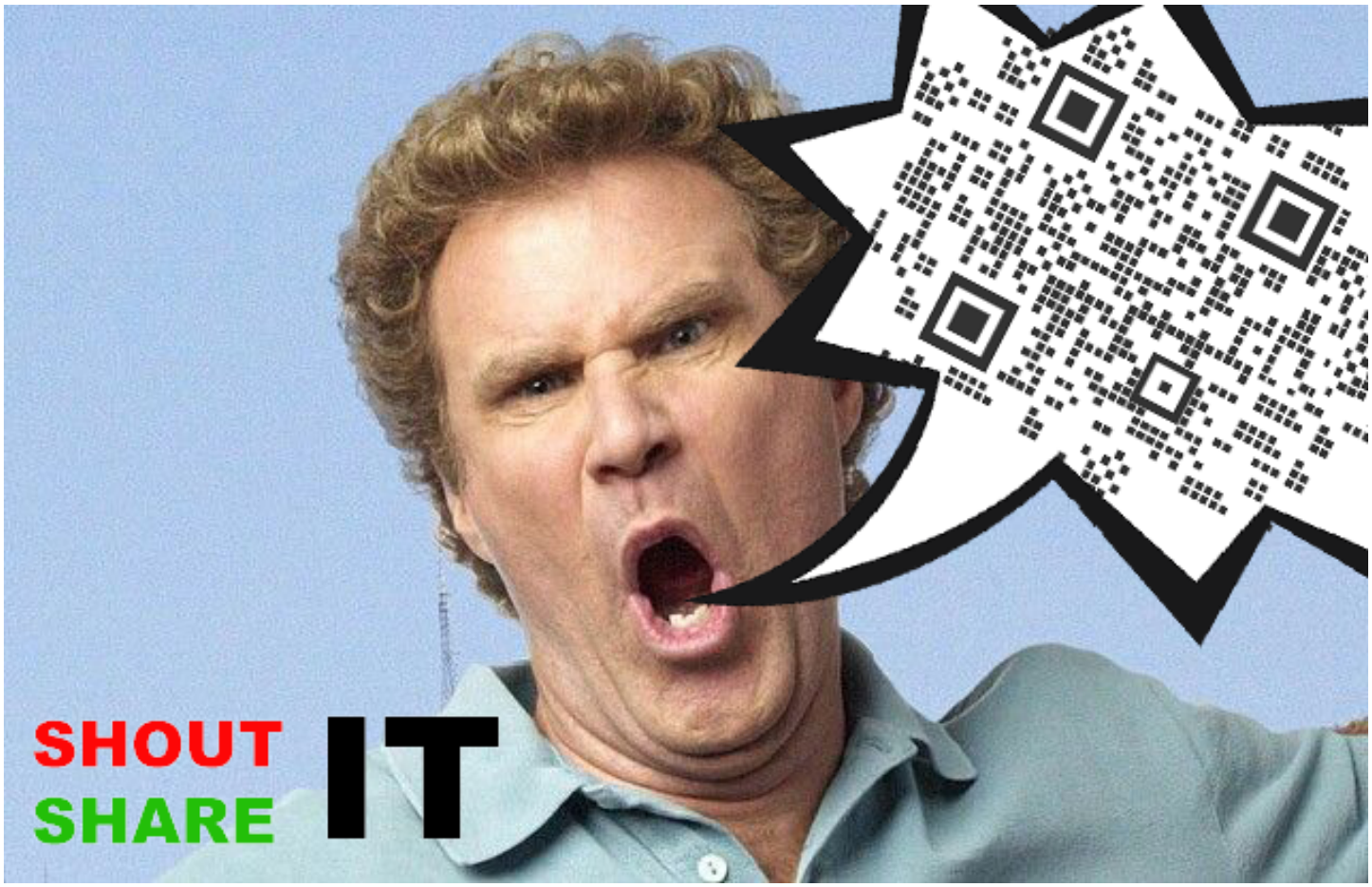
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This volume brings together essays on wide ranging issues that impinge on party politics and the challenges confronting the party system. Together, it presents an overall picture of the origins, evolution and transformation of party politics by focusing on important parties and their organization and politics since Independence. The introductory chapter provides an outline of the main phases in the development of the party system and the role of social cleavages, political mobilization and electoral change in understanding party politics. It raises a number of questions of general interest: What are the conditions under which parties and party systems change? How has the party system managed to cope with social change? How do we understand the contemporary party system and its impact on democracy?

Essays following the introductory chapter focus on the development and decline of the Congress party and the problems facing the once dominant Congress party in its pursuit of political support in the post-Nehru period. The second section concentrates on the dramatic rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party, on the nature and character of Hindu nationalism, and its impact on the ideology and social base of the party. Essays in the third section examine how and why the Communists came to power, the Socialist style of politics of the Janata Party/Dal, the

(Cont'd on back flap)

Parties and Party Politics in India

Themes in Politics Series

GENERAL EDITORS

Rajeev Bhargava
Partha Chatterjee

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Note from the General Editors

Teaching of politics in India has long suffered because of the systematic unavailability of readers with the best contemporary work on the subject. The most significant writing in Indian politics and Indian political thought is scattered in periodicals; much of the recent work in contemporary political theory is to be found in inaccessible international journals or in collections that reflect more the current temper of Western universities than the need of Indian politics and society.

The main objective of this series is to remove this lacuna. The series also attempts to cover as comprehensively and usefully as possible the main themes of contemporary research and public debate on politics, to include selections from the writings of leading specialists in each field, and to reflect the diversity of research methods, ideological concerns, and intellectual styles that characterize the discipline of political science today.

RAJEEV BHARGAVA
PARTHA CHATTERJEE

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Princeton University Press for James Manor, 'Parties and the Party System' in Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy: Changing State-Society Relations*, 1988.

Editor's Acknowledgements

This book is an attempt to fill a gap in contemporary political science literature, which I have encountered when teaching courses about parties and party systems in India. Writings on political parties are not many and are not readily available. There is often a problem in providing students with materials illustrating the effects of social and electoral change upon party politics. This volume dealing with various aspects of parties and political change, consists mainly of published articles, except the chapter by E. Sridharan, which was especially written for this volume.

I am grateful to the General Editors of *Themes in Politics*, Partha Chatterjee and Rajeev Bhargava, for their support to this volume. I would like to thank Amrita Basu, Christophe Jaffrelot, Yogendra Yadav, and E. Sridharan for their suggestions and help on various issues related to this book. Special thanks are due to Douglas Verney and Adil Tyabji for their editorial help with the Introduction. Thanks are also due to Siddoji Rao and Appu Joseph for assistance with proofs and bibliography, and Oxford University Press for competent and patient editorial support.

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Introduction: Conflict, Pluralism and the Competitive Party System in India[1]

In comparison with the experience of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, democracy in India has proved to be resilient. This despite the fact that the preconditions which Western scholars often associated with democracy—homogeneous population, an industrial economy, high levels of education, and shared civic culture—were absent in the India of the 1950s.[2] Yet, democracy in India has not only endured, it has grown. Apart from the brief interlude of the Emergency from 1975 to 1977, democratic institutions have remained intact; thirteen parliamentary elections and many more assembly elections have been conducted. Turnouts for elections to parliament and to state assemblies have risen steadily and significantly.[3] Governments have taken major policy initiatives, and parties have alternated in power through the electoral process. The democratic process has deepened with new social groups entering the ambit of the political system represented by new parties like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) embodying the

[1] I am most grateful to Douglas Verney, Rajeev Bhargava, and Partha Chatterjee for helpful comments and suggestions on a previous draft.

[2] On this aspect, see Atul Kohli, 'Interpreting India's Democracy: A State–Society Framework', in Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State–Society Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Francine Frankel, 'Introduction', in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargav, and Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[3] Starting with 45.7 per cent turnout in the first general election, it has risen to 60 per cent in the 1990s. In the 1999 elections the turnout was 59.5 per cent.

interests of the Dalits.[4] Parties in general have played a critical role in the democratic process, especially in drawing historically disadvantaged sections of society into the political system.

Yet, in recent years, political parties are in a state of disarray. Intra- and inter-party conflicts have eroded the legitimacy and reputation of both parties and leaders. Parties and politicians have been accused of eroding the democratic system by practising corrupt politics, eschewing a long-term stand on national interest, and maximizing their personal gains and influence. In short, political parties wilfully pursue their own narrow political interest at the expense of the greater common good. However, without their political organization and mobilization, the democratic system would not have worked.

As a system, the Indian system is distinctive. Certainly, it does not correspond to its European and American counterparts. Writing about it, Paul Brass noted the difference: 'Party politics in India display numerous paradoxical features, which reveal the blending of Western and modern forms of bureaucratic organization and participatory politics with indigenous practices and institutions. India's leading political party, the Indian National Congress, is one of the oldest in the world, yet it has not succeeded in providing the nucleus for an institutionalized party system which can be fitted easily into any one of the conventional categories of party systems known in the West.'[5] At a broader level, Rajni Kothari highlighted the distinct features of the Indian political system, and profiled an Indian model of democratization, which he argued should not be assessed by any supposedly universal (or Western) criterion.[6] The Indian party system is indeed complex, and an important reason for the complexity is the social heterogeneity that has made it impossible for a single set of parties to emerge across the country. This is reflected in the variegated character of Indian political parties. The Congress, established in 1885, continues to occupy a place in the national political arena. The 1980s witnessed the emergence of Hindu nationalism and the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) around which the ruling coalition currently

[4] Former untouchable caste groups describe themselves as Dalits in preference to Harijan or Scheduled Caste.

[5] Paul Brass, *Politics of India Since Independence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 64.

[6] Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970).

revolves, and these coexist with the world's longest surviving democratically elected Communist government at the state level.

Major transformations have taken place since Independence in India's party system. The essays in this volume examine and evaluate changes both within political parties and the party system. The first section 'The Dominance and Decline of the Congress' focuses on the Congress party, which dominated Indian politics for four decades after Independence. The discussion opens with Rajni Kothari's conception of the party system, notably the Congress system, and an alternative picture presented by the analysis of Pradeep Chibber and John Petrocik. They suggest that decentralization of the party system and the Congress had started in the late 1960s, and that the Congress's support base was state specific and determined by distinct social constellations in the regions. Stanley Kochanek details the centralized Congress party created by Indira Gandhi in the wake of the 1969 party split in comparison to the relatively more open Congress system of the Nehru era. Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav outline the shift in the social base of the Congress party from a catch-all, umbrella organization to one reduced to merely picking up the residual constituencies which other parties had not mobilized.

At the centre of change in the party system is the rise of the BJP. The second section 'The Rise and Growth of Hindu Nationalist Politics' begins with B. D. Graham's chapter on the historical growth of Hindu nationalism. He discusses the development of the Jana Sangh's organization and leadership in the 1950s and 1960s. Christophe Jaffrelot's analysis of the BJP reveals a project of party building in which priority was given to the development of a solid network of activists supplemented by a strategy of ethno-mobilization to produce a mass following. Oliver Heath explores the transformation of the BJP from a localized party with a restricted political presence into the main political force with a mass following and the effects of its expansion on its social base. The article jointly authored by Mary Katzenstein, Uday Mehta, and Usha Thakkar focuses on the combined role of the Hindutva ideology and a coercive party organization in the growth of the Shiv Sena, transforming it from an organization limited to metropolitan Mumbai to one spread throughout the state of Maharashtra.

The third section 'Radical Politics and Left Parties' shifts the focus to the politics of class through an analysis of the trajectory

of leftist parties. Javeed Alam concentrates on the formative days of the Communist Party of India after Independence to understand the present condition of the retreat of class politics. Amrita Basu reviews the record of parliamentary communism in the context of the larger debates about communist strategies in a democratic system.

The fourth section 'Social Diversity and Party Politics' begins with Jyotirindra Dasgupta's study of the political developments associated with the Janata phase of politics from 1977 to 1979. At the heart of the contemporary political transition is the rise and assertion of regional and state-based parties. Issues of ethnicity and other axes of social cleavage have played a significant role in the transformation of party politics in recent times. Zoya Hasan probes the formation of state-based parties, notably the BSP in Uttar Pradesh. This represents an effort to use politics based on caste identities to alter the power structure. Narendra Subramanian interrogates the strategy and the policies of the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazgham (ADMK) when it was in power from 1972–7 and its grounding in the notions of an autonomous subculture associated with a popular film star.

The fifth and final section entitled 'Political Competition and Transformation of the Party System' focuses on the transformation of the party system. James Manor provides an overview of the changes in the party system from the Nehru era to the 1980s, emphasizing the consequences of the Congress's institutional decline. Eswaran Sridharan examines the process of party fragmentation in the evolving national party system, and Balveer Arora looks at the relationship between India's parliamentary federalism, the party system, and coalition politics.

Issues in Indian Party Politics

An elucidation of party politics in India should begin with an understanding of the role of political parties in democratic systems generally. Parties are undoubtedly essential to the functioning of democracy; they perform varied functions within and outside the realm of politics. Their leadership and policies, internal practices, and the patterns of interaction with other parties and institutions can have profound consequences for the system of governance. As a keystone political institution in representative regime, the

modern political party regularly fulfils three critical functions: nominating candidates for public offices; formulating and setting the agenda for public; and mobilizing support for candidates and policies in an election. Other institutions perform some of these functions too. What, however, distinguishes parties is their emphasis on linkage.[7] Parties are seen, both by their members and by others, as agencies for forging links between citizens and policy-makers. Their raison d'être is to create a substantive connection between the ruler and ruled.[8]

Political parties are central to Indian political life. Their role in political mobilization, governance, the formulation and implementation of economic and social policy, ethnic conflict, separatist movements, and the working of democracy has long been the focus of analysis. Their centrality arises from the fact that they are the key link between individual and state, and state and society. Political parties provide the crucial connection between social process and policy-makers, and influence debates and policies on issues affecting the interests of various social groups in the political system.

Following a number of studies in the late 1960s and 1970s,[9] political scientists have paid little attention to mapping the growth and decline of parties. However, during the past decade,

[7] A. H. Somjee, 'Party Linkages and Strife Accommodation in Democratic India', in Kay Lawson (ed.), *Political Parties and Linkage: A Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 204–21; Nathan Yanai, 'Why Do Political Parties Survive? An Analytical Discussion', *Party Politics*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1999, pp. 6–7.

[8] As Giovanni Sartori has pointed out, this does not mean that party members are not self-seeking: 'The existence of parties by no means eliminates selfish and unscrupulous motivations. The power-seeking drives of politicians remain constant. Even if the party politician is motivated by crude self-interest, his behaviour must depart—if the constraints of the system are operative—from the motivation. Parties are instrumental to collective benefits, to an end that is not merely the private benefit of the contestants. Parties link people to the government.' Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party System: A Framework for Analysis* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 25.

[9] The early work on parties includes Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: Indian National Congress* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1967) and Stanley Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India: The Dynamics of One-Party Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968).

interest in democracy and electoral politics has grown enormously. India's democracy in the 1950s and 1960s was not seriously competitive.[10] Low levels of competition marked elections in this period. The choice was between the all-powerful Congress and regionally fragmented opposition. Competition increased owing to the greater importance of electoral politics and participation in the 1970s and 1980s. The past decade has seen a participatory upsurge amongst the marginalized sections of society in terms of the caste hierarchy, classes, and gender. The average voter turnout has been within the range of 55 to 64 per cent in the last eleven general elections between 1962 and 1999. This exceeded the average level in the United States. Even in the first two elections the aggregate voter turnout was as high as 46–8 per cent. More striking, voter turnout for state assembly elections was close to these levels during the same period, surging to 67 per cent in elections held during 1993–6.[11] India is among the few democracies where the electoral turnout of the lower orders of society is well above that of the most privileged sections. This is remarkable in the absence of laws relating to compulsory voting. The possibility that a lower caste person will vote is much higher than for an upper caste person.[12] This has been accompanied by a significant rise in the more active forms of political involvement, such as attendance at election meetings, membership of political parties, along with a much greater sense of the political efficacy of the vote.

[10] There is a burgeoning of election and psephological studies. See Yogendra Yadav, 'Reconfiguration in Indian Politics: State Assembly Elections, 1993–95', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 31, nos 2–3, 1995; William Vanderbok, 'Critical Elections, Contained Volatility and the Indian Electorate', in Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy (eds), *Diversity and Dominance;* Richard Sisson and William Vanderbok, 'Mapping the Indian Electorate I; Trends in Party Support in Seven Elections, and Mapping the Indian Electorate II: Patterns of Weakness in the Indian Party System', in recent efforts the National Election Study launched in 1996 and coordinated by Yogendra Yadav and V. B. Singh at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi.

[11] Francine Frankel, 'Introduction', in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava, and Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[12] Yogendra Yadav, 'Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge: Trends of Bahujan Participation in Electoral Politics in the 1990s', in Francine Frankel *et al.*, op. cit.

As more and more people participated in the democratic process, competitive politics and the party system have undergone a major change over the past two decades. The Congress and the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance face dissension at all levels extending from differences between the BJP and organizations it is affiliated with, such as the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and between the party and its coalition partners.

To understand the significance and implications of these developments, many of which are spurred by electoral and political change, it is useful to distinguish two important phases in the development of the party system. One-party dominance, moderate levels of political participation, and élite consensus characterized the first phase. This has given way to a second phase of greater democratization and the opening up of the political system to non-élite participants. The latter has resulted in the unfolding of unexpected political patterns. These include the replacement of the 'Congress system' with multi-party competition, an intensification of party competition, the fragmentation of parties and emergence of coalition politics. Particularly significant is the decline of one-party dominance, the rise of the BJP as the single largest party in Parliament, and the advent of coalition politics. Coalition governments have come into their own because the last five parliamentary elections have failed to produce a single party majority. Equally important is the democratic upsurge amongst the hitherto underprivileged sections of society and their perceptible influence on the working of democracy and political institutions.

Two issues are particularly vital. The first concerns the effect of institutional variables, principally, the electoral system and federalism, on the party system.[13] The second pertains to the role of social cleavages, more precisely, the relationship between social cleavages and political mobilization. These shifts raise a number of questions of general interest for students of Indian politics. What are the conditions under which parties and party system change? How has the party managed to cope with social change? How do we understand the contemporary party systems and its impact on democracy?

[13] Anindya Saha, 'The Indian Party System 1989–99', *Seminar*, August 1999, pp. 21–2.

One-party Dominance and the Congress System

In a seminal article published in 1964, Rajni Kothari analysed the Indian party system from the comparative perspective of the distinction between one, two, and multi-party systems.[14] He argued that the term 'one-party dominance' expressed India's party system more accurately than the term 'one-party system', which more precisely described the authoritarian type of party system, for instance that in Ghana. He formulated a new conceptual category, the 'Congress system', to characterize India's party system. As the leading and preponderant political organization, the Congress obtained an absolute majority of seats in parliament in the first four general elections. The party split in 1969. The Congress split thrice before 1969. In 1946, the Socialists (Congress Socialist Party) left the Congress to form the Socialist Party. In 1950 Acharya Kripalani and his followers left to form the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party. Later, Rajaji and his band left to establish the Swatantra Party. In 1969 the faction which remained with Indira Gandhi won a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. However, following a brief period of Emergency rule, her party lost the elections of 1977 and began a period in opposition, during which it split again. Renamed Congress (Indira) in 1978, it returned to power not only in the elections of 1980, but also after her assassination in 1984. It was defeated in the 1989 elections but was victorious in those of 1991.

The Indian National Congress was unique amongst the Third World parties in dominating, almost without coercion, a competitive multi-party system. Most accounts of the Congress party from 1947 to 1964 emphasize the role of Jawaharlal Nehru in the construction of a high modernist India in which the state would assume charge of economic development and nation-building activities with an appeal to the ideas of socialism, secularism, federalism, and democracy. Nehru dominated the Congress party from 1951 when he successfully moved against its conservative president, Purshottam Das Tandon. Under Nehru's leadership, the party built upon the nationalist legacy in three ways: its

[14] Rajni Kothari, 'The Congress System in India', *Asian Survey*, vol. 4, no. 12, December, 1964.

development of a party organization, its accommodation of diverse interests, and its relationship with other parties. Dominance by a single party coexisted with inter-party competition, but the opposition parties had little prospect of replacing the Congress, except in a few states. Its success was attributed to the elaborate party structure and extensive patronage networks. This helped the Congress to appeal to the vast middle ground of interests and values. Internally, it was a grand coalition of major social and political forces held together by its image as the party that won India independence and popularity of leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, as well as a very large number of provincial leaders who had participated in the national movement and had managed the party organization at the state level. Ideologically, the party was centrist, committed to democracy, minority rights, secularism, a centralized form of federalism, and mixed economy. Institutionally, the Congress system was a hierarchical organization radiating downwards from the central to the provincial and district levels, each level working in consonance with the corresponding level of government. However, this system began to crumble as the Congress electoral fortunes deteriorated after 1967. The problems facing the Congress were partly symptomatic of the growing democratization of traditional power relations throughout society and partly the result of its own actions, such as the failure to create a rational basis for generating a new leadership through political institutions.

Political change from the 1967 to the 1977 elections increased party competition. Opposition parties formed coalition governments in several states. Both elections created conditions in which a group of state leaders, popularly known as the Syndicate, comprising K. Kamaraj, Sanjiva Reddy, S. Nijilingappa, S. K. Patil, and Atulya Ghosh, assumed an important role in national politics. The split in 1969 ushered in significant changes in the party system. In the 1971 elections Indira Gandhi's Congress faced a united opposition, and this gave rise to a polarization in which two contending blocs disputed fundamental issues about the nature of the political order. After considerable unrest, Indira Gandhi imposed a national Emergency. The Emergency threatened liberal institutions and affirmed the perception that a crisis of regime had indeed occurred. However, the 1977 elections were the harbinger of a new era in the party system, creating new openings for the opposition parties.

This period witnessed an intensification of conflict and competition between political parties.

There also began a period of acute instability in the party system. By the end of Indira Gandhi's life, the political landscape had changed unequivocally. The legislative majorities won by the Congress under her leadership were not used to implementing the radical policy promises made by her. This weakened the government, and in the long run the party's massive support drained away. Under both Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv, the organizational decline of the Congress was precipitous. Electoral majorities, such as the record-breaking success in the 1984 elections in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination coexisted with structural decay and decadence. By the late 1980s there was a political vacuum in Indian politics. The Congress still remained the only party able to command support in every region of the country, but its share of the vote declined dramatically. Not long after, it lost its parliamentary majority. This premier party, with its nationalist orientation, broad social base, and a modicum of social cohesion, had begun a long decline.

Congress Decline

The reasons for Congress's decline can be attributed to the political changes that occurred during Indira Gandhi's tenure in office. Although Indira Gandhi confronted difficult problems of governance, it was the government's centralizing drives coupled with her intense desire for personal power and penchant for political manipulation that were eventually responsible for many of India's woes. Under her regime, the once robust Congress party's roots withered and governance became less institutionalized, more personalized and centralized. This is an argument that many commentators have advanced repeatedly.[15] According to them,

[15] Rajni Kothari, 'Crisis of the Moderate State and the Decline of Democracy', in Peter Lyon and James Manor (eds), *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth*, (Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1994); Rajni Kothari, 'A Fragmented Nation', *Seminar*, 24–9, January 1983; James Manor, 'Anomies in Indian Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18(1–2), 1983; Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

the erosion of institutional arrangements was intimately bound up with the deinstitutionalization of the Congress party and the emergence of genuinely pluralist politics in the post-1977 period.

The Congress's decline has complex causes. Most striking is the inability of the party to maintain the political bases of its coalition, especially the loyalty of the socially disadvantaged groups. It is true that the Congress party continues to secure support across the social spectrum. From the late 1980s, however, the party has found itself hard-pressed to command support for its broad centrist and secular appeal in the face of a serious challenge from political formations with sectarian appeals and social bases, such as the BJP, Samajwadi Party (SP), and BSP.[16] New parties, representing the backward and scheduled castes, are regionally concentrated and have strengthened their position at the expense of the Congress. To contend with this challenge, the Congress has needed to revitalize its electoral base, built over the years by representing the needs of different constituencies and groups. Unfortunately, its dependence on charismatic leadership as means of winning elections has distracted the party from the task of reconstructing its organization. Furthermore, the inadequacy of the Congress practice of socialism and secularism discredited its traditional ideological plank. Once embracing a broad spectrum of ideological, caste, and regional interests, the Congress has lost its authority over the past two decades. Since the late 1980s, it has failed to generate a popular leadership capable of accommodating varied interests and blunting the counterattack of its rivals.

Some of these trends were in evidence as far back as the 1970s, but leaders like Indira and Rajiv Gandhi were able to contain them by building coalitions around their own personalities. They reinvented the Congress, but on a different basis from the organizational or ideological configuration of the party in the 1950s and 1960s. In the process, the Congress became a leader-dependent force that adhered to the charismatic appeal of the Nehru–Gandhi family.[17] This worked so long as the other ingredients of success

[16] Zoya Hasan, *Quest for Power: Oppositional Movements and Post-Congress Politics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[17] B. D. Graham calls this 'rally leadership'. See his *Representation and Party Politics: A Comparative Perspective*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993, Chap. 6 'Experience of Rally Politics'), pp. 88–110.

were in place: its social base in the countryside, its mobilization through populist slogans, and well-oiled party machine.

The death of Rajiv Gandhi exposed the inadequacies of the Indian National Congress in all these areas. Instead of dealing with them, the Congress leadership invited Rajiv Gandhi's widow to lead the party. The entry of Sonia Gandhi into Indian politics in the 1998 election reinforced the domination of Nehru–Gandhi leadership over the Congress organization. While her entry appeared to arrest the long-term decline of the party, the setbacks suffered by the Congress in the 1999 parliamentary election indicate that charismatic leadership is wholly insufficient for the Congress's revival. The revolt of the Maharashtra strongman, Sharad Pawar, against Sonia Gandhi's leadership in May 1999 was symptomatic of the deeper problems that have faced the Congress since 1967: the need to include regional leaders who represent the emerging social forces. These alone can appeal to the regionally based, vernacular speaking, rural but rapidly urbanizing lower caste groups.[18]

Not being tied to any particular group or region, the Congress enjoyed a distinct advantage over sectional and regional parties. It is still the party that manages to garner the largest amount of support from the underprivileged.[19] This support, however, comes to the Congress by default and is not the outcome of a systematic effort to create a counter-bloc of the underprivileged, or to build a social coalition based on social democratic politics. Moreover, the advantage has been greatly reduced by the salience of the state level as the substantive arena of electoral choice over the past decade. In many a local or regional contest, community or caste based mobilization tactics may be more effective in garnering support than a catch-all strategy.[20] Besides, the Congress does not any longer pull in the lower castes and classes in sufficient numbers, into its ambit, having to contend with left and left-of-centre parties that possess greater influence among these groups.

[18] Radhika Desai, 'The Last Satrap Revolt?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 19–26 June 1999.

[19] Yogendra Yadav with Sanjay Kumar and Oliver Heath, 'The BJP's New Social Bloc', *Frontline*, 19 November 1999, p. 40.

[20] Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav, 'The United Colours of the Congress: Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21–8 August 1999.

Yet, the Congress is still quite capable of winning elections: the results of the 1998 assembly elections and its success in the Karnataka assembly elections in 1999 testify to that. Nonetheless, it has been indisputably dislodged from its position of pre-eminence at the Centre.

Filling a Political Vacuum: The BJP

The demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu militants, and its aftermath, dramatically highlighted the growing influence of political Hinduism and the rise to power of the BJP. Dedicated to a redefinition of nationalism, the BJP began to fill the political vacuum created by the decline of the Congress, providing a Hindu nationalist alternative. Its climb to national power was promoted by the campaign to build a Ramjanambhoomi temple in Ayodhya thought to be the birthplace of Ram. It benefited from the Congress government's mishandling of the Shah Bano affair and the introduction of the Muslim Women (Protection of Right on Divorce) Act, 1986 and also the mishandling of the Punjab crisis. It was also linked to its opposition to the minority United Front government's decision in 1990 to implement the recommendation of the 1980 Mandal Commission to extend reservations beyond the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes by reserving 27 per cent of all positions in the Indian Administrative Services and Indian Police Service for the OBCs.

The BJP's rise to prominence has been the defining feature of Indian politics over the last decade. The Congress, for so long the 'natural' party of governance, lost out to this new political force. The BJP has emerged as the single largest party in the last three elections. It is the only party to win two elections in a row since 1984, and the only one to continually improve its seat tally. However, with 183 seats in 1999, it was almost 90 short of a majority and its share of valid votes has declined from 25.6 per cent in 1998 to 23.7 per cent in 1999. The majority of its MPs (61 per cent) in the thirteenth Lok Sabha were returned from north India, as against 74 per cent in 1996. Gujarat is the only state beyond the Hindu belt where the BJP has established a stable base: it won 20 of the 26 seats. In all other non-Hindi-belt states the BJP remains a marginal player or depends upon regional

parties.[21] Its recent expansion is clearly through alliances with regional parties.

With the BJP's emergence as the dominant party, though it is not yet an all-India party, scholarly interest in Hindu nationalism has increased, generating considerable debate about the character of the BJP. Scholars are asking whether the ideology it represents is part of wider struggle to reconstitute India in accordance with Hindu consciousness and identity. They are concerned about its assertion of Hindu power over other communities. Most accounts concentrate on the implications of the BJP's rise to national power on the political system. They have commented on its interpretation of secularism, minority rights, democracy, and the proposal to establish a presidential form of government.[22] Scholarship on the BJP can be divided into two broad groups. The first group comprises those who believe the BJP is a right-wing party underpinned by an aggressive, homogenizing Hindu nationalism committed to rewriting history by distorting the principal plank of the post-Independence project of secularism, nationalism and democracy. Scholars in the second group believe that the BJP cannot pursue this agenda and it will have to adjust to the pluralism of Indian society; a pluralism that compels parties to move towards the centre.

[21] Information on the BJP's performance in the 1999 election is based on Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Afterword', in Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds), *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, new edition (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[22] For historical background, see B. D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Studies of the BJP include Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics* (London: Hurst Publishers, 1996); Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds), *The BJP and the Compulsions of Indian Politics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Paul Brass, 'The Rise of the BJP and the Future of Party Politics in Uttar Pradesh', in Harold Gould and Sumit Ganguly (eds), *India Votes: Alliance Politics and Minority Governments in the Ninth and Tenth General Elections* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Amrita Basu, 'Mass Movement or Élite Conspiracy: The Puzzle of Hindu Nationalism?', in David Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph have long maintained that one of the most striking features of Indian politics is its persistent centrism. Some scholars of the Indian party system have extended this reasoning. They argue that all political parties that seek power in India are subject to a centripetal influence that drives them to the centre. The question however is whether centrism is a general principle that applies to the BJP. To what extent have the centripetal pressures of electoral democracy influenced the BJP? Commenting specifically on the BJP's trajectory, Ashutosh Varshney finds that the party has become increasingly moderate. The reason he gives is simple enough: proximity to and assumption of power. In short, the more the BJP exercised power at the centre and in the states the more moderate it has become.[23]

Between Extremism and Moderation

Clearly, there are tremendous pressures for moderation that all extremist parties confront once they come to power. The BJP is not exempt from such powerful pressures. In the short run, moderation is necessitated by electoral calculations and the compulsions of coalition politics.[24] In electoral terms, its militant strategy of ethno-religious mobilization of the 1980s paid rich dividends to the party. However, after the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992, the BJP's vote share did not increase substantially. Its core support, accounting for 85 per cent of its total Lok Sabha seats, came from the three Hindi heartland states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh plus the three western states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan. In these states the pro-Hindu rhetoric has huge appeal. This rhetoric, however, has few takers in the south and the east, which the BJP has to penetrate in order to be a serious contender as the ruling party in New Delhi. Therefore, in the 1998 and 1999 elections, the BJP moderated its stance and was then able to broaden its electoral base, both spatially and ethnically, by aligning with regional parties. This moderation was manifest in the National Agenda of Governance, which dropped four controversial

[23] Ashutosh Varshney, 'The Self Correcting Mechanisms of Indian Democracy', *Seminar*, January 1995.

[24] Atul Kohli, 'Enduring Another Election', *Journal of Democracy*, July 1998, pp. 15–17.

issues: building a temple at Ayodhya; enacting a uniform civil code; abolishing the National Minorities Commission; and abrogating Article 370 of the constitution, which allows greater autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir. Most of the BJP's allies in the 1999 election were regional parties, of which only the Shiv Sena could be described as a like-minded right-wing party. Initially, the BJP was not comfortable with the idea of coalitions, but it has rapidly demonstrated its willingness to enter into power-sharing arrangements with regional parties at the national level. Since 1998, most regional leaders have backed the government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In 1996, by contrast, nearly all the major regional parties had joined hands to keep the BJP out of power. Alliances have helped the geographical expansion of the BJP, to the extent that by the end of the 1999 elections it had an electoral presence in most states, Kerala being one of the exceptions.

Socially too the BJP has come a long way from being a Brahmin–Bania party. In its rise to power, it has created a new social bloc, a coalition of various groups, whose claim to power is based on 'a new kind of majoritarianism', which is not simply Hindu majoritarianism.[25] However, this social bloc has supported the NDA coalition, which includes regional parties that have regularly reaped low caste support, and not the BJP as such. The BJP's own social support is much more élite dominated both in terms of the caste and class hierarchy. Besides, Muslims are not yet part of the BJP's social constituency though the party is trying to woo them. The election of Bangaru Laxman, a Dalit from Andhra Pradesh, as the party president in August 2000 who was subsequently replaced by Jana Krishnamurthy after the Tehelka scam, is evidently designed to widen its support among the Dalits. This might not however be all that easy; its efforts to win over OBCs, Muslims, and Dalits will alienate its upper caste base, the mainstay of the party. This strategy, which was epitomized by the appointment of the OBC leader Kalyan Singh as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1991 and again in 1997, resulted in the consolidation of the upper caste lobby and damaged the further expansion of the party in Uttar Pradesh. Nonetheless, religion is not the principal axis in the construction of the new bloc. A convergence of caste–community and class distinctions,

[25] See Yogendra Yadav *et al.*, 'The BJP's New Social Bloc', op. cit., p. 32.

and an overlap of social and economic privileges have formed the new social bloc. This convergence is reflected in its support base in the last two elections. The BJP obtained more votes from the privileged sections of society: upper caste rather than lower caste, rich rather than poor, men rather than women, more educated rather than less educated. Its support among the lower castes and minorities is more limited.

Doubtless, the compulsions of power and the demands of running a coalition government, obliged the BJP to adopt moderation.[26] L. K. Advani observed that the moderate phase began in 1996 when the BJP failed to form the government.[27] The party had to tone down emotive identity-politics in order to make alliances. Thus, for the BJP, coalition strategy is both an ideological and managerial challenge, which consists of harmonizing ideology with the quest for power.[28] The former BJP president, Kushabhau Thakre, attributed the BJP's growth to its ability to adjust to new situations'.[29] To avoid conflicts with the large number of allies with separate agendas, the BJP has had to temper its distinctiveness. However, even while grappling with the tensions of coalition politics, the BJP has not deviated from its core commitments, adopting policies that will eventually bring the state government closer to the politics of Hindutva. Most remarkable is the systematic effort to 'saffronize' the bureaucracy, educational institutions, and the media. Above all, there has been the vilification of minorities. Despite its protestations to the contrary, the BJP has not been able to contain the extremist elements in the Sangh Parivar. The deal between the BJP government and the VHP in Gujarat in December 1999 culminating in laying the foundation stone of a Ram temple in Halmodi, a tribal and Christian village, was reminiscent of similar arrangement that led to the demolition of the Babri mosque. Prime Minister Vajpayee has struggled to distance his government from the political compulsions of the

[26] On the prospect of moderation, Amrita Basu, 'The Transformation of Hindu Natrionalism? Towards a Reappraisal' and Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Hindu Nationalism and Democracy', in Francine Frankel *et al.* (eds), *Transforming India*, op. cit.

[27] *India Today*, 1 November 1999.

[28] Report on the two-day National Council meeting of the BJP in Chennai, *India Today*, 27 December 1999.

[29] *Times of India*, 23 December 1999.

Hindutva agenda and move in the direction of consensual governance.

While there is no real dilution of the BJP's social agenda, its policy of economic nationalism has been completely reversed. The renunciation of *swadeshi* or economic nationalism constitutes the biggest shift in BJP policy. Wedded to swadeshi for the past five decades, the BJP-led NDA government, after just two years in office, has proved to be the most enthusiastic about liberalization and globalization of the economy, and in the process has sought to appease foreign investors, rather than the party's swadeshi lobby. Equally significantly, the nuclear policy has been pursued vigorously. The 1998 manifesto promised that it would resume nuclear testing begun by Indira Gandhi in 1974. The BJP government, after less than three months in office, ordered the Pokhran tests on 11 May 1998. It went ahead with the bomb in order to build its political constituency. None of this indicates that the BJP is obliged to stay moderate in power.[30] Similarly controversial issues could force themselves back to their agenda when the party needs to consolidate its support.

In the longer run, therefore, the deeper issue is how moderate should we expect the BJP to remain if it wins a majority in Parliament and can form a government on its own? Is it possible for the BJP to transform itself into a liberal right-of-centre party, yet at the same time be linked to the RSS fraternity? This is the central issue of Indian politics today. An answer to this question must take into account the uniqueness of the BJP. Among political parties, the BJP is atypical. It has enduring ties with a range of allied organizations, chief among them being the RSS and the VHP. It functions as a party, a movement, and government at the state and national level.[31] Neither the RSS nor the VHP have given up the Hindutva agenda; indeed they regularly reiterate their commitment to it, but they have not mounted pressure on the government for its fulfilment. That Vajpayee managed to distance his government from the Sangh's clutches during his second term in office

[30] See Stuart Corbridge, 'The Militarization of all Hindudom? The Bhartiya Janata Party, the Bomb, and Hindu Nationalism', *Economy and Society*, vol. 28, 2 May 1999.

[31] For such an interpretation, see Amrita Basu, 'The Puzzle of Hindu Nationalism: Élite Conspiracy or Mass Movement?' in David Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation: Religion*, op. cit.

was largely due to his popular appeal. This does not however mean that the BJP has liberated itself from the RSS. The three most important leaders of the BJP, which include Prime Minister Vajpayee, Home Minister Advani, and Human Resources Development Minister Murli Manohar Joshi, are close to the RSS. Moreover, the RSS knows that its electoral success and its ability to forge strategic alliances are due to Vajpayee's leadership. Furthermore, the RSS has accepted the compulsions of coalition politics and the attendant moderation in the BJP in view of the political protection offered by the BJP government to its activities. This helped the RSS to exert and extend its influence within state and society[32] as it has been doing over the last few years.

The BJP's more astute leaders, as well as others anxious to retain their hold on power, realize that if the party is to usurp the role of the Congress, it will have to prove that it is not a sheep in wolf's clothing. This is however an uphill task because the party is the political outgrowth of an extremist right-wing ideologically motivated movement. Given that many of its party cadres come from the RSS and its affiliation to the RSS–VHP network has proved decisive in its growth, the BJP cannot afford to break its links with the RSS. Therefore, moderation can change the agenda of the BJP-led NDA government, but it cannot modify the fundamental character of the BJP, unless there is a change in its relationship with the RSS. The BJP and its, ideological forbears have not had a consistent record. In the late 1960s the Hindu Right embarked upon anti-cow slaughter agitation, then went through a moderate phase in the 1970s, only to return to militancy in the 1980s, and again back to moderation from 1996. There is little reason to believe that it has settled once and for all into a moderate mould.

Social Cleavages, Political Conflict, and Party Politics

There have been major debates among scholars about the significance of language, region, class, caste, community, and ethnic conflicts in Indian society and politics. Conventionally, political discourse on ethnic categories had focused on language and region. After Independence, linguistic identities, culminating in

[32] Jaffrelot, 'Afterword', in *BJP and the Compulsions of Politics*, op. cit.

the reorganization of the states, occupied centre-stage. Many of the Congress leaders feared that the linguistic division of states would lead to secession from the Union, and the nation would thus disintegrate.[33] That fear has largely proved to be groundless, but the formation of linguistic states has nonetheless reinforced the cohesion of regional identities. These are expressed by the formation of parties such as the DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, the Akali Dal in Punjab, the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam, and the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.

Over the past decade, political parties have organized along socio-economic fault lines rather than linguistic divides, promising to provide a new dynamic to Indian democracy. The link between ethnic cleavages and the party system is evident from the increased role of caste and community identity in politics, and this has motivated considerable research on the construction of political identities and the strategies of political movements derived from such identities.[34] The argument has centred on two issues. One has been the impact of ethnic mobilization on mass political sentiments, political partisanship, and changes in voting patterns. The other is the impact of the processes of mobilization on the emergence of an inclusive political arena. These identities have helped the rise of regional, communal, and caste parties. A recent study of Dravidian parties demonstrates that the internal pluralism of parties, and not simply social pluralism, promotes greater representation of emergent groups, the reconstruction of public culture, and tolerance.[35] This is explained through a distinction between organizational pluralism and social pluralism, arguing that social pluralism does not preclude the growth of non-pluralistic parties. Parties like the BJP can grow in pluralistic societies, but since they lack internal pluralism, they can sideline pluralistic forces. By contrast, internal pluralism within India's communist parties has facilitated social pluralism and democracy.

[33] The most important work on these lines has been done by Paul Brass, especially his collection of essays in *Caste, Faction and Party in Indian Politics*, 2 vols (Delhi: Chanakya, 1985) and his *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

[34] Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens and Democracy in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

[35] Ibid., pp. 37–40.

Numerous interpretations of Indian politics have argued that social differences associated with the process of economic and political development have provided political parties with either the organizational or numerical support to win majorities in elections. More specifically, it is assumed that the nature of the party system typically mirrors the complexity of social cleavages along lines of religion, caste, language, and region to produce a multi-party system.[36] Social cleavage theory has had a significant influence on the perception of links between the social structure and party politics in India.[37] One major weakness of this theory, however, is that it disregards the role of human agency. It simply derives divergence of interests from existing social divisions, without asking why particular differences are important or become influential only in some regions or why specific cleavages should be politicized in certain situations and what role political actors play in this process? This aspect is singularly important as India's diversity yields a variety of social differences, and these differences can form the basis of very different kinds of parties and distinct party systems at the national and state levels, depending upon the patterns of political mobilization and organization. Social differences that emerge in the course of economic development and state formation become cleavages as a result of political and electoral mobilization. Parties perform an extremely important role in forging links between social classes, caste groups, and party systems.

The contrasting trajectory of the communist parties that came to power in Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura stresses the significance of political organization and mobilization in determining the relative salience of social cleavages on patterns of voting and party

[36] Subrata Mitra and V. B. Singh, *Democracy and Social Change in India: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of the National Electorate* (Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999), pp. 132–4.

[37] There is a large literature aimed at identifying the social bases of Indian politics and the lines of cleavage and conflict. An important single collection that addresses these themes is Francine Frankel and M. S. A. Rao (eds), *Dominance and State Power in India: Decline of a Social Order*, 2 vols (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); see also Ramashray Roy and Richard Sisson (eds), *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*, 2 vols, especially, chapters by Ghanshyam Shah and John Wood. Also see Rajni Kothari, *Caste in Indian Politics* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970).

strategies. The CPI(M) has established an impressive support base in these three states by focusing on distributive policies and radical reforms, rather than the politicization of caste differences.[38] Sustained land reform measures and democratically elected panchayats have tilted the balance of power in favour of the rural poor in West Bengal, and this has helped the CPI(M) to build a wide circle of social and political support. This has enabled the regime to remain in power for twenty-five years. As in most other states, the propertied classes remain dominant in the sphere of production, but unlike other states, they do not control political power. The case of the Left parties is important because it illustrates the very different part played by parties in political, and pluralist, mobilization.

Studies of left parties are concerned with the origins, dilemmas, and outcomes of Left movements. They have focused their attention on the ideology, leadership, and organization of the CPI(M) and its pursuit of incremental reforms within the constraints of a democratic–capitalist framework and the predicament about using parliamentary means to achieve radical reform. What has attracted the greatest attention is the resemblance between the CPI(M) and social democratic parties in Western Europe. Examining the extent to which the CPI(M) is a social democratic party might help in mapping the conservative or radical direction of its policies, but will not illuminate the institutional reconstruction undertaken by Left parties in achieving radical change within the existing structural conditions.[39] These include initiatives in the areas of decentralization, federalism, and land reforms.[40]

[38] On what distinguishes the CPI(M) regime of West Bengal from other ruling parties in other states, see Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[39] The work on the Left parties includes T. J. Nossiter, *Communism in Kerala: A Study in Political Adaptation* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), Ross Mallick, *Development Policy of a Communist Government: West Bengal since 1977* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Javeed Alam, 'Communists in Search of Hegemony' and Aditya Nigam, 'Communists Hegemonized', in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian State* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[40] See essays in Sugata Bose and Barbara Harris-White (eds), *Sonar Bangla?* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000).

By contrast, in north and north-western India party strategies politicized caste differences and newly politicized groups made their presence felt through such parties. Particularly significant has been the role of middle and rich peasants and lower and backward castes, traditionally ignored by the Congress, who have in recent years thrown their weight behind the opposition parties. Leaders of lower castes, starting with Charan Singh's Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) in the mid-1960s, later began to organize their own parties to gain greater representation and power for their caste groups. Among these parties, the BSP has attracted considerable academic attention.[41] The party commands strong support among the scheduled castes and rural and urban poor in several states of north India. Significantly, its support structure is the direct opposite of the BJP's. Several recent studies focus on ethnic identification, ethnic mobilization, or caste conflict to explain the BSP phenomenon. In South India, pro-backward caste parties, such as the TDP, DMK, and AIADMK, have held sway in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu for a much longer period.

The picture that emerges is of an intense power struggle in northern India unleashed by the entry of lower castes into the political world.[42] As elections have gained in importance, levels of political participation have climbed. Data on participation shows that more important than the increase in the overall voter turnout, is the change in the social composition of those who participate in political activities. Expanding participation has placed the poor and the downtrodden groups in the caste, class, and gender hierarchy, at the centre of the political system.[43] In the early years after

[41] Kanchan Chandra, 'Mobilizing the Excluded', *Seminar*, August 1999 and also 'The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India: The Decline of Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 59, no. 1, February 2000; Ian Duncan, 'Dalits in Rural North India: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, October 1999; Sudha Pai and Jagpal Singh, 'Politicization of Dalits and Most Backward Castes: Study of Social Conflict and Political Preferences in Four Villages in Meerut District', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 7–14 June 1997.

[42] Christophe Jaffrelot, 'The Rise of Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt', *Journal of Asian Studies*, February 2000.

[43] Yogendra Yadav, 'The Second Democratic Upsurge', in Francine Frankel *et al.* (eds), *Transforming India*, op. cit.

Independence, Congress party leaders used patronage networks to build vote banks among low castes and minorities to win majorities. This rainbow coalition dampened class conflict, thus politicizing other social identities. Indeed the Congress systematically tried to bury the class issue, and its brand of accommodation was a major obstacle to the cross-caste mobilization of the poor and disadvantaged. It pre-empted the emergence of radical movements by making religion, caste clusters, or tribal groups the primary identity through which economic discontent was articulated.[44]

The fragmentation of the Congress coalition into upper caste, backward caste, Muslim, and Dalit groups led to a redrawing of the relationship between social cleavages and political loyalties. It opened up the possibility of the mobilization of both the privileged and the underprivileged. The privileged have indeed been brought together under the BJP banner of ethno-nationalism, while the underprivileged have been fragmented by their failure to forge a social bloc to counter the privileged sections. The most obvious reason for this is the emergence of sectional parties that represent distinct social constituencies which are difficult to unite and bring together into a political coalition or alliance.

One of the catalysts in the formation of these parties is the decline of Congress domination and the inability of the BJP to fill the vacuum. In consequence, caste and class clusters that were once part of the Congress coalition have found a voice through other parties. This process was advanced by the implementation of recommendations of the Mandal Commission. The rapid mobilization of socially underprivileged groups has resulted in a realignment of political parties along state, sub-state, and caste lines, creating conflict amongst them and with the upper castes. The heightened caste and communal competition provoked by the combined effect of Hindutva and Mandal has radically changed the social map of politics. This trend has become increasingly evident at the national level since 1989 when state-based parties joined together to form a minority National Front government led by the Janata Dal. Attempting to offer a broad-based centre–left alternative to the Congress, the principal ideological plank of

[44] Francine Frankel, 'Conclusion', in Francine Frankel and M. S. A. Rao (eds), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order*, vol. 2, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

the National Front was the propagation of social justice and the advancement of the interests of backward castes and minorities. However, social justice became synonymous with caste politics, and this led to the party's fragmentation.

Transformation of the Party System

All these changes have altered India's party system, and the transformation has been far-reaching. Two developments stand out. First, there is no longer one-party dominance. The period from 1967 to 1977 witnessed the passage from one-party dominance to a multi-party system. Second, several states have moved towards a two-party system, though the two parties vary from state to state. This change, evident since the 1989 elections, may mark the beginning of a new era in the party system.

The Congress that once commanded overwhelming majorities in the Lok Sabha has lost its hegemonic position. Its continuing decline has however been obscured as the party returned to office in 1991 to form a minority government, and then with the help of pre-poll and post-election allies, was able to govern as a majority party until 1996. It had however ceased to be the natural party of governance. The 1999 election, the third in as many years, was held after the AIADMK withdrew support from the BJP-led government in April 1999. In the elections that followed the Congress's national vote level increased to 28.5 per cent but its seat tally was reduced to the smallest ever, down to 114 seats from the 141 it won in the 1998 election. The factors responsible for the poor performance of the Congress were the manner of the dissolution of parliament, its inability to form an alternative government, and its lukewarm response to the Kargil conflict. The success of the armed forces in repulsing the Pakistani intrusion in Kargil helped the BJP to win back the support it had lost in the 1998 assembly elections. Serious differences between the Congress and Samajwadi Party (SP) frustrated the Congress's hope of forming a government. Even so, the BJP on its own was not able to increase its seats, and in terms of vote share it actually lost nearly two percentage points, declining from 25.6 per cent in 1998 to 23.7 per cent in 1999. However, the BJP-led alliance won the election with a coherent majority. This was due not to the acquisition of new mass support by the BJP but to new allies. The big winners

were parties such as the TDP, Trinamool Congress, and the Biju Janata Dal. This is evident from the decline of BJP's share of seats from 73 per cent to 61 per cent.

Political developments over the last decade make it clear that Indian politics now has a strong lower class thrust. This development in combination with the increased influence of regional and state-based parties, mirrors a paradigm shift in politics. Today, both regional and state-based parties are contenders for power in all states except Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. However, the lower-caste politics of both the backward caste and Dalit variety is often more focused on local issues and sectional claims. The lower caste parties do not even attempt cohesion of competing claims and are thus unable to federate as political force at the national level.

Through a conjunction of these processes—the creation of new parties and groups and their particularistic strategies—parties have increasingly fragmented over the years. Frequent party splits, mergers, and counter-split significantly increased the number of parties in the national arena. In 1952, 74 parties contested in the national elections, while in 1998 the number had risen to 177. Single and multi-state parties accounted for as many as 220 seats in 1998, and dominated governments in eastern and southern India.[45] The state-based parties had increased their share from 8 to 19 per cent of the vote. Two factors have contributed to the multiplication of parties. One has been the growing power of regionalism and regional parties[46] and the other the intensified pursuit of political power rather than disagreement over principle. This explains the fracturing of the Janata Dal in 1999, the formation of the NCP on the eve of the 1999 elections, and splits in the Congress and the BSP in Uttar Pradesh in 1998.

[45] This is not an entirely new phenomenon in Indian party politics. For example, when Indira Gandhi swept back to power in the 1980 election the number of state-based parties were 19 and there were 11 registered (unrecognized) ones. However, in the past few years the number of state-based parties has increased substantially. In 1998 it numbered 30 and registered (unrecognized) parties 139. Together they won 32 per cent of the vote.

[46] James Manor, 'Regional Parties in Federal Systems: India in Comparative Perspective', in Balveer Arora and Douglas Verney (eds), *Multiple Identities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Konark, 1995).

The 1990s were characterized by the emergence of the state as the effective arena of political competition. The first five general elections yielded one-party dominance in which the Congress received over 40 per cent of the vote, while the second largest party could win only 10 per cent. With the exception of the 1967 elections, the pattern in the states was similar, with Congress dominating the state arena as well. In 1977, the Congress lost power to a coalition of opposition parties, but the same coalition did not rule all the states. There is now a two-level party system in which the state pattern differs from the national pattern. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh have two-party systems. The pattern is however different in Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura which have evolved a bipolar system, in which a number of parties are clustered at each pole. A third type of multi-party system now obtains in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Karnataka. The 1999 elections indicate some change in this pattern, with both Bihar and Karnataka moving in the direction of bipolarity as parties converged around two poles: the BJP and its allies on the one hand and the Congress on the other. A different kind of change has occurred in Maharashtra and West Bengal, Congress splitting to give rise to the NCP in Maharashtra and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal respectively. This pattern reveals multiple bipolarites, with different pairs of parties/alliances controlling different states.

Thanks to India's social diversity and to the first-past-the-post electoral system, a nationwide two-party system has not emerged. At the national level, the BJP and the Congress have dominated the electoral contests in 1998 and 1999, obliging the regional parties to regroup around them and to coalesce into two distinct blocs: the BJP and its allies on the right and the Congress party and its allies in the middle. Regional parties such as the TDP, DMK, BSP, SP, and the Left parties retain significant influence and support in several states. At the national level, the organized expression of the 'third front' in the form of the 1996 United Front, a conglomeration of centre-left parties, has disintegrated, and most of its constituents have allied with the BJP. The fragmentation of the United Front has benefited both the BJP and Congress.

Politics of Coalitions

The intensification of competitive politics has changed the party system from being a rivalry between national parties into one between alliances and coalitions of national and state parties. The nineties have witnessed a succession of minority or coalition governments. The Governments formed in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998, and 1999 were coalitions of several parties. The BJP-led government formed in 1999 is the eighth since 1989. In 1996, a fourteen party United Front government was formed, which was supported by the Left parties. It relied on the Congress to offer support from outside the government, with the aim of preventing the BJP, the largest party in parliament, from coming to power. The minority coalitions in 1989 and 1996 were toppled when their supporters outside the government, the BJP and the Congress respectively, withdrew support, whereas the 1998 coalition government fell after the AIADMK, a member of the coalition, withdrew support. The last two elections have seen the formation of four successive governments with a total of 25 parties contributing to governmental majorities, either as coalition partners or as supporters of minority governments from outside. Many small parties have acquired disproportionate influence because the few seats they held were crucial to forming a government.[47] Even the smallest of parties, even ones with a member or two, can drive hard bargains with the larger parties, which need their support either for a majority or to shore up regional bases. Party divisions in Tamil Nadu exemplify the process. With Dravidian ideology in retreat, many groups that formerly supported the Dravidian movement have formed parties of their own.[48] The Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Pattali Makkal Katchi, the Tamilzhaga Rajiv Congress, and Puthiya Tamizhagam are breakaway groups from the DMK and AIADMK; the Tamil Manila Congress broke away from the Congress party.[49]

[47] Csaba Nikolenyi, 'The New Indian Party System', *Party Politics*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1998, p. 370.

[48] See V. Krishna Ananth, 'Brahmanisation of the Dravida Legacy', *Seminar*, 480, August 1999.

[49] 'A Party has coalition potential', argues Giovanni Sartori, 'no matter how small it is, if it finds itself in a position to determine over time, and at some point in time, at least one of the possible governmental majorities'. He also speaks of the blackmail potential, but his definition of this is not very

Trends in the last few elections suggest that a parliamentary majority is difficult to achieve in normal elections. Notwithstanding the BJP's claim that it favours coalitions, even if it wins a majority on its own, its long-term political project demands a decisive majority so that it can reduce its dependence on other parties and can pursue its core policies. The Congress has not been able to win an electoral majority since 1984. Still, the party has not given up the hope of attaining a single-party majority in the Lok Sabha. Even some of the most ardent Congressmen acknowledged at a brainstorming camp in Panchmarhi in October 1998 that there are some regions, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, for example, where the Congress has little alternative but to ally with state-based parties, if it wants to come to power. Yet, the central Congress leadership perseveres with the policy of assailing regional parties as the principal obstacle to single-party rule.

'We are not ready to support a Third Front, Fourth Front or whatever it is called. We will not give our support to anybody else', declared Sonia Gandhi when she failed to cobble together a minority government with outside support after the defeat of the Vajpayee government on 17 April 1999. The decision not to back a Third Front, which would have included the possibility of a government headed by Jyoti Basu, was based on a refusal to accept the need for coalitions at the national level. Paradoxically, the decision of the SP to block the formation of a minority Congress-led government fortified the party's determination to secure a single-party majority. Time and time again the Congress party has turned its back on coalitions. Convinced about the inherent instability of coalitions, especially an omnibus coalition of the BJP kind, the Congress made an alternative offer: the cohesion and stability of single-party rule. Thus the Congress did not commit itself to alliances and searched for a majority of its own. Moreover, the Congress leadership still believes that the Indian electorate has limited faith in coalitions, owing to their repeated failures to continue in power. Persistent conflicts between coalition partners

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clear, and in any case less relevant to the situation at hand. He claims that a party has blackmail potential when '...its existence, or appearance, affects the tactics of party competition and particularly when it alters the direction of the competition—by determining a switch from centripetal to centrifugal competition either leftward, rightward, or in both directions—of the governing oriented parties'. *Parties and Party System*, op. cit., p. 122.

have rendered them unworkable form of governance. This calculation formed the bedrock of its electoral strategy in the 1999 elections. All that the Congress offered were state-specific electoral adjustments. The party's ambivalence towards coalitions stems from its conception of itself as a coalition of varied interests. In his presidential address at the 1997 plenary session in Calcutta, Sitaram Kesri cryptically dismissed the idea that 'coalitions are here to stay', observing that 'the Congress itself has been the most successful coalition'.[50] He failed to add that whereas the Congress was a successful coalition from 1947 to 1974, since then it has failed to keep the coalition intact.

By contrast, after its inability to secure a majority to preserve its thirteen day government in May 1996, the BJP chalked out a diametrically opposite strategy. It stepped up the search for regional allies. It forged an 18 party alliance for the 1998 election, but even so failed to win a majority. However, after the election it cobbled together a majority by getting the support of the Telugu Desam and the National Conference. For a short period from 1996 to 1998, the influential secular/communal divide shaped coalition building and the choice of alliance partners. The Janata Dal, Left parties, and a number of regional parties formed the government at the Centre, supported by the Congress from outside, in order to keep the BJP out of power. However, the unity of secular forces proved to be short-lived. It was confined to the United Front government's term in office, and proved inadequate when pitted against the attractions of anti-Congressism. The Congress/anti-Congress divide, a legacy of our decades of Congress dominance, proved stronger than the ideal of secular unity in determining alliances. More crucially, anti-Congressism helped the BJP to marshal support from state-based parties, which were bitterly opposed to the Congress. Even Left parties, such as the Revolutionary Socialist Party and Forward Bloc, and parties such as the SP resolutely opposed the idea of a Congress-led government.

While coalition governments have become the order of the day, they have been unstable and unable to generate confidence in their capacity to govern. Parties and politicians have changed their loyalties so rapidly that sustainable coalition building has proved impossible. The formation of four governments and the necessity

[50] Cited in *Hindu*, 11 April 1999.

for three general elections after 1996 raised ungainly apprehensions of instability and lack of governance. The twelfth Lok Sabha lasted a mere thirteen months, arousing anxiety about its impact on economic development. Political stability remains elusive because of the shifting calculations of rival parties in the political arena, which raises doubts about the viability of coalitions in a situation of rapidly changing alliances.

Character of the Party System?

The decline of one-party dominance is no longer in dispute. The question of interest is how to characterize the current party system. Are we moving from catch-all Congress system to a new type of multi-party system or a two-party system? As argued earlier, there is no pronounced tendency towards a two-party system at the national level. What has emerged is a multi-party system with two alliance structures at each end and several state-based and small parties that are free floating. A mix of bipolarity and multipolarities distinguishes the state level.

The Congress party, an inclusive, dominant party, designed to cross-cut ethnic, class, and caste divisions, dominated the first phase of the party system. By contrast, the BJP and a form of sectarian politics dominate the second phase that draws on the cleavages of caste, class, and region, which overlap. If social integration and coalition building based on a social welfare programme was the objective of a Congress-style centrist party, the principal goal of the emerging party system is to secure material and political benefits for particular groups and/or regions. Yet, because it heads a coalition of 23 parties BJP's politics is not simply caste-based or community-based.

This past decade has seen a sharp rise in political mobilization on the basis of ethnic identities. North Indian politics epitomizes this trend, apparent in the emergence of more or less homogeneous parties of the OBC strata and Dalits, and politics in Uttar Pradesh exemplifies the new pattern. Once dominated by the centrist politics of the Congress, new electoral majorities have been built up, with statewide *jati* clusters constituting the primary social bloc for political mobilization.[51] This occurred in 1989–91 when the

[51] Pradeep Chibber, *Democracy Without Association: Transformation of the Party System and Social Cleavage in India*, see Chapter 6: 'From Catchall to

Congress vote-share dropped 10 percentage points (from 29.7 per cent to 17.4 per cent) and when the Janata Dal, SP, and BSP between them managed to garner 40 per cent of the vote.[52] The key to this transformation is the virtual disappearance of the Congress, and its replacement by the BJP, SP, and the BSP. In contrast to the Congress, these parties represent specific social groups, namely the upper, backward, and scheduled castes. However, even in Uttar Pradesh it has not been simply the replacement of a non-ethnic party with a collection of ethnic parties. After all, the Congress too had invoked caste and community identities in its political campaigns in the past. Rather, the important change is in the type of ethnic politics that now dominates the political arena. Whereas for the Congress non-ethnic interests were combined with ethnic appeals and issues, the three parties mentioned above have made appeals to ethnicity the centrepiece of their political campaigns.

While the new caste and communal militancy has generated several arenas of conflict between upper castes and OBCs and thus might be expected to lead to a hardening of efforts to convert ethnic majorities into permanent majorities, this has not happened. One reason is the size and heterogeneity of the country's constituencies. India's electorate of about 600 millions is divided into 543 constituencies, fewer than those of the British House of Commons. The large heterogeneity of constituencies aids mobilization along multiple cleavage lines. However, heterogeneity does not stop parties from making efforts at playing on such cleavages, as those between Hindus and Muslims to their advantage. Clearly, the existence of cross-cutting cleavages did not discourage the BJP from mobilizing along the Hindu–Muslim cleavage in the 1989–92 period. Other parties also make use of the cleavages of caste and region. Yet, people do not vote exclusively on the basis of their caste or community. Even in circumstances when such interests become paramount, as during the Hindutva and Mandal controversies, a healthy concern for party programmes, policies, and economic interests balanced them. Furthermore, caste is associated

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a Cleavage-Based Party System in an Indian State: Uttar Pradesh', especially pp. 150–7 (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1999).

[52] See my *Quest for Power* and Kanchan Chandra and Chandrika Parmar, 'Party Strategies in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections, 1996', *Economic and Political Weekly*, no. 37(5), February 1997.

with class. On a range of policy issues there are no significant differences between upper and backward castes per se. In fact intra-caste differences are likely to outweigh inter-caste differences. The difference reflects their different class positions. The key variable is not always caste or community but the perception that a particular party will promote the voter's economic and social well being. This can be seen from the effect of class and caste affiliation on the BJP vote. It is evident from the tendency of scheduled caste and OBCs to favour the BJP as they climb up the social ladder. The class base of the BJP vote is perhaps more significant than its caste base, but the BJP is not caste-based or class-based in any simple reductive sense. Rather, it represents a bloc of caste–class privilege.

Intense political competition encourages parties to constantly search for new support and thus prevents the growth of centrifugal tendencies in Indian society. Even the BJP cannot afford to permanently exclude other social categories, including Muslims. Because of the heterogeneity at the national, state, and constituency levels, political parties have to appeal to groups not previously part of their core constituency. Hence most parties, including parties of the Right, are under pressure to adopt broad-based strategies. Indeed the growth of the BJP over the past decade indicates that even a right-wing party committed to Hindu majoritarianism cannot disregard, at least in the short run, the pressures India's diversity places on all political parties. Its new social support among the OBCs and its expansion in south India testifies to the tendency of crowding around the middle to gain new support. Another factor contributing to the continued relevance of the centrist option is the enduring influence of the Congress. The Congress though not dominant, is still strong enough to ensure the continuance of centrism. This means that the party will not be torn asunder by a typically Left–Right ideological or ethnic polarization.[53]

Emerging Issues and Challenges Facing the Party System

Party politics in India has confronted numerous challenges. Not only has the Congress system destroyed itself, but the fragmentation of the Congress coalition has triggered a new emphasis on self-representation which raise questions about the party system and

[53] Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox* (New Delhi: Sage, 1989), p. 39.

its capacity to accommodate diverse interests, and also form stable state and national coalitions.[54] An important test facing the polity is to evolve a party system or political parties that can effectively articulate and aggregate a variety of interests. This requires parties to project broader appeals.

There is a great deal of concern about the decline of parties, much of the disquiet centering around the growth and limitations of certain kinds of parties, notably caste-based parties, rather than the decline of all types of parties. Attention must also be paid to developments in all types of parties that have proved detrimental to the system. Among these are factionalism, corruption, personality rule, and lack of inner party democracy. To these may be added the lack of proper organization, intolerance of the opponent's point of view, evasion of accountability, and undue influence exerted on public officials by party functionaries. In consequence, parties have not acted as effective agents in evaluating and resolving policy problems and in maintaining the stability and coherence of the political system in the long run. All this has buttressed dissatisfaction with governments, whatever their stripe.

The democratic ideal is strong parties with well-developed political identification, programmatic goals, and organization. These are rare everywhere. In India, numerous small parties have emerged principally as vehicles for influential and charismatic leaders to gain power. Such leaders rarely advocate the institutionalization of parties, because parties as institutions constrain individual discretion and the personal power of charismatic leaders.[55] Leaders of such parties, some of which may be little more than pressure groups, tend to avoid membership of umbrella coalitions and aspire to wield direct power to maximize their own influence and that of their constituencies. Well-developed parties often emerge from below. The growth of the two Communist parties and the DMK, AIADMK, Telugu Desam, and BSP indicate this possibility. However, these parties are confined to a few states. Furthermore, not all parties from below become institutionalized. On the contrary, leaders like Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh, M. G. Ramachandran in Tamil Nadu. N. T. Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh showed no

[54] Balveer Arora, 'Negotiating Differences: The Challenge of Federal Coalitions', in Francine Frankel *et al.* (eds), *Transforming India*, op. cit.

[55] Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent*, op. cit., p. 392.

interest in promoting the institutionalization of their parties. This is true of national leaders too: Indira Gandhi destroyed the Congress as an institution. The development of the Congress after the 1969 split was in sharp contrast to its organizational development in the pre-Independence period.[56]

Multi-party democracy appears to have struck deep roots in India. In most states, the levels of political participation have risen, and in some states they have reached the levels of continental Europe. The persistence of a democratic political system and a competitive party system through five decades, notwithstanding the presence of politically active caste, religious communities, and tribes, challenges the long-held views that consider individual rationality and aggregation of individual interests essential for the maintenance of the institutions of democracy.[57] The relative success of democracy in India despite so much poverty, illiteracy, and inequality imply that high level of economic development is not a prerequisite for the sustenance of democracy.[58] On the contrary, India's experience suggests that representative institutions can function in a country composed of states with a wide range and levels of economic and social development. These include states predominantly agrarian and poor, as well as states with varied cultural characteristics. At the same time, the Indian experience also brings to mind the tension and pressures in building a stable and accountable system of government; one capable of radical change in a society that is marked by acute economic and social disparities.

With all their deficiencies, India's myriad political parties have played a crucial role in organizing a competitive multi-party

[56] Ibid.

[57] Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). For arguments that assert the resilience of Indian democracy, see Francine Frankel's 'Introduction' in Frankel *et al.* (eds), *Transforming India*, op. cit., and Subrata Mitra and Mike Enskat, 'Parties and the People: India's Changing Party System and the Resilience of Democracy', in Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert (eds), *The Resilience of Democracy: Persistent Practice, Durable Idea* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 124–5.

[58] Arend Lijphart attributes the maintenance of democratic institutions to the institutionalization of a system of power sharing. 'The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 90, no. 2, 1996.

based democracy and in forming representative party-based governments, thus avoiding the challenges of non-party, plebiscitary democracy, and strong executive leadership grounded in populist authoritarianism.[59] Parties remain the best means of ensuring that government has a popular basis and social conflicts are mediated and settled within a process of accommodation and compromise. Even frequent elections have not alienated the majority of voters: to the contrary, they appear to give the mass of voters a sense of control over government. None of this, of course, minimizes the seriousness of the dilemmas facing India's political parties and the political system. The overriding problem is the persistent inability of governments to deliver on their promises, and the inadequacies of parties in responding to the preferences of all its citizens. Yet, despite the erosion of the institutional edifice of democracy, which so preoccupies intellectuals generally, and political scientists in particular, the Indian electorate (to judge by its 60 per cent turnout in national elections) appears satisfied with the extraordinary range of choices that the parties offer.

[59] Ibid., pp. 124–5.

PART I

The Dominance and Decline of the Congress

1

The Congress 'System' in India[+]

RAJNI KOTHARI*

In the study of party systems, attention has so far been given to two opposite phenomena, the two-party or multi-party system on the one hand and the 'one party system' on the other. Until quite recently discussion in this field has been dominated by a dichotomous (or trichotomous) division on these lines, the principal criterion employed being the availability of choice between alternatives. The two-party system provides such a choice, and so does the multi-party system, though in a more complicated manner;[1] the one-party system does not provide this choice. That, at any rate, is the rationalization behind the widely prevalent typology of party systems. To be sure, there is of late an attempt to look more closely at the precise functioning of the various party systems, especially in some of the new nations of Africa.

[+] Asian Survey, vol. 4, no. 12, December 1964, pp. 1161–73.

* This article is a condensed form of a chapter in my book *Politics in India* published by Little, Brown and Co. In writing it I have drawn freely from the discussions I have had with Bashiruddin Ahmed, Henry Hart, Gopal Krishna, and Ramashray Roy at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi. I am grateful to each of them. I am further grateful to Bashiruddin Ahmed for reading through the draft manuscript and making valuable suggestions and criticisms.

[1] Sigmund Neumann has introduced other distinctions to differentiate the multi-party system as it operates on the Continent in Europe. He distinguishes between the party of action and the party of platform, depending upon the degree of proximity to power. To this he adds a further distinction between the party of programme and the party of personages, broadly approximating to the distinction between institutional and personal government. See Sigmund Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1956).

There are also attempts at a 'behavioural analysis' of the American and British party systems.[2] These studies are giving rise to new ways of looking at party phenomena and have made scholars aware of the shortcomings of the present typology.

While such a discussion is going on, it might be useful to look at the Indian experience with political parties, which is one of the most successful party systems in operation and yet is a system that cuts across the usual stereotype and also calls into question the very criterion of political performance usually employed in the analysis of party systems. That it is the function of politics to offer choice between alternative sets of policies and personnel may indeed be a gross oversimplification of political phenomena. Politics is not always reducible to who gets what, when, and how. We do not, however, intend to go into these more fundamental questions in this paper. In what follows, we try to describe the party system as it has been functioning in India.

While the availability of multiple parties and the freedom to form parties gives an impression of similarity between India and the West, and while there actually are some similarities as well as an element of common heritage, two differences must be noted at the outset. In the first place, the 'Western' model posits a criterion of alternation or replacement—the ideal of a 'choice between alternatives' and the assumption that the choice is exercised in that manner—which is not the critical factor in the working of the party system in India. Second, the western system implies a relationship between the government and the party organization in which the latter plays an instrumental and subsidiary role which is not true of India.[3]

The Indian system can be described as a system of *one party dominance* (which, it may be noted, is very different from what is generally known as a one party system). It is a competitive party system but one in which the competing parts play rather dissimilar roles. It consists of a *party of consensus and parties of pressure*. The latter function on the margin and, indeed, the concept of a *margin of pressure* is of great importance in this system. Inside the margin

[2] Samuel J. Eldersveld, *Party System: A Behavioral Analysis* (Rand McNally, 1964). R. Rose, 'Parties, Factions and Tendencies in Britain', *Political Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, February 1964.

[3] Robert Mckenzie has popularized this formula. See his *British Political Parties*, Second Edition (London: Heineman, 1963).

are various factions within the party of consensus. Outside the margin are several opposition groups and parties, dissident groups from the ruling party, and other interest groups and important individuals. These groups outside the margin do not constitute alternatives to the ruling party. Their role is to constantly pressurize, criticize, censure, and influence it by influencing opinion and interests inside the margin, and, above all, exert a latent threat that if the ruling group strays away too far from the balance of effective public opinion, and if the factional system within it is not mobilized to restore the balance, it will be displaced from power by the opposition groups. Both the ideas of an in-built corrective through factionalism within the ruling party, and the idea of a latent threat from outside the margin of pressure are necessary parts of the one party dominance system. It is an assumption of the system that the party of consensus, which is presumably the only legitimate instrument of power, is sensitive enough to public pressures and demands, but a safeguard is nonetheless provided through the operation of the *latency factor*, so that there is always available an identifiable group or groups which can be called into action for the preservation of competition and external control, if the normal mechanism provided by competing elites within the party fails to respond. The sensitivity of the entire system depends on the sensitivity of the *margin of pressure*, its flexibility and general responsiveness being a function of the elbow room it provides to factions, dissident groups, and opposition parties in the making of critical choices and decisions.

It is the consensus system which operates through the institution of a party of consensus that is of central importance in this scheme of politics. In India, the Congress, which is the party of consensus, functions through an elaborate network of factions which provides the chief competitive mechanism of the Indian system. We have considered elsewhere in some detail the main features of the factional system and the functions it performs.[4]

[4] Rajni Kothari, 'Party System', *The Economic Weekly*, 3 June 1961; Rajni Kothari, 'India's Political Take-Off', *The Economic Weekly*, Special Number, July 1962; also see Myron Weiner, 'Political Leadership in West Bengal', *The Economic Weekly*, Special Number, July 1962; and W. H. Morris-Jones, 'India's Political Idiom', in C. H. Phillips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963).

We have shown there how political change takes place at each level in this system, and how in the process not only new men come to power but new kinds of men, bringing with them new attitudes and orientations to power, and new states of ideology and issue articulation. We can briefly recapitulate the arguments here. In 1947, the Congress, which functioned as a broad-based nationalist movement before independence, transformed itself into the dominant political party of the nation. Although a number of opposition parties came into existence, it was recognized that the Congress was the chief party, representing a historical consensus and enjoying a continuing basis of support and trust. Under the circumstances, political competition was internalized and carried on within the Congress. There developed an elaborate system of factions at every level of political and governmental activity, and a system of coordination between the various levels through vertical 'faction chains'.[5] Originating on the basis of individual competition between leaders, these factions were then built around a functional network consisting of various social groups and leader–client relationships. In the process, a system of patronage was worked out in the countryside, traditional institutions of kin and caste were gradually drawn and involved, and a structure of pressures and compromises was developed. These were mediated through two new tiers of political organization, a managerial class of politicians occupying critical organizational positions in the state and the district Congresses, and a class of 'link men' in the field[6] through whom they operated. It was in the course of the working of this system that political competition was intensified, changes took place, new cadres of leadership drawn from a more diffuse social basis came to power, and an intricate structure of conflict, mediation, bargaining, and consensus was developed within the framework of the Congress.

The system got aggregated at the state level where individuals who had risen to power in the Congress organization sometimes constituted the chief opposition to the government, provided an alternative leadership, exercised controls and pressures on it, and

[5] Rajni Kothari and Ghanshyam Shah, 'Caste Orientation of Political Factions: Modasa Constituency—A Case Study', *The Economic Weekly*, Special Number, July 1963.

[6] F. G. Bailey, *Politics and Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1963). Bailey uses the term 'brokers' to describe these men.

in many instances overthrew it from power and replaced it.[7] In this process, elections in the organization played an important role, but also the general elections, and the selection of party candidates for the general elections. Finally, the system of mediation and arbitration as well as an inter-level coordination in the Congress[8] ensured active involvement of the central leadership in the factional structure. More recently, starting some time before Mr Nehru's death, we find the operation of the same system at the top, through the activization of the central executive of the party, and the latter's firm and successful mediation in the determination of governmental succession after Nehru.[9] The upshot of all this is the critical

[7] The pattern of replacement of the government leaders by leaders controlling the party organization in the state began in Madras when Mr C. Rajagopalachari was replaced as chief minister by Mr Kamaraj, the state Congress President, in 1953. In Uttar Pradesh (UP) Mr C. B. Gupta first acquired control of the PCC and then managed to win over support of a majority of the members in the Legislature Party and brought about the fall of Chief Minister Sampurnanand in 1961, much against the wishes of Prime Minister Nehru. The Orissa Chief Minister Harekrushna Mahatab was similarly replaced by Mr Bijoyanand Patnaik in 1962, when the latter as chief of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) virtually organized an agitation against the Congress–Gantantra coalition ministry that the former was heading and forced the central leadership to intervene in his favour. Likewise in Gujarat and Mysore the leaders who had gained control of the PCC, took over as chief ministers in 1963.

[8] The Central leadership has been able to play a considerable role in the rivalries between Congress factions in the states through such instrumentalities as the Central Parliamentary Board, the sub-committees in the Working Committee that are appointed from time to time to look after the affairs of PCCs where the conflicts are acute, and through the system of the 'observer' appointed to supervise, on its behalf, the organizational elections in the states. Possessing vast powers, ranging from the determination of the eligibility of primary members to vote to the conduct of the poll for election of PCC office-bearers, the 'observers' have been able to help one or the other faction to gain control of the organization at the state level. The High Command itself has in a few cases been able to tilt the balance one way or the other, or bring about a rapprochement between rival factions through direct intervention, usually at the request of local groups.

[9] Mr Kamaraj as Congress President played an important role in the selection of the successor to Mr Nehru. With Lal Bahadur Shastri, Morarji Desai, and Jagjivan Ram in the field, the task of determining the degree of support each enjoyed among the members of Parliament (MPs), state chief

importance of the party organization at all levels, the competitive relationship between the organization and the government, and between the factions within each of them.

Structurally, such a party system displays two features. There is plurality within the dominant party which makes it more representative, provides flexibility, and sustains internal competition. At the same time, it is prepared to absorb groups and movements from outside the party and thus prevent other parties from gaining in strength. It is a system that concentrates strength within the dominant party and then builds internal checks to limit the use of this strength. In this way the party representing a historical consensus also continues to represent the present consensus. This ensures the legitimacy of the system and of the institutional framework under which it operates.

The role of the Opposition in such a party system has already been discussed. By posing a constant threat, it ensures the mobility and life of the internal power structure of the Congress. On the other hand, its own strength is continuously conditioned by the strength of the Congress, gaining where the latter loses, and sometimes gaining substantially when the latter has lost grip over the situation or its internal thermostat has failed.[10] Such a position has its structural implications. Electorate-wise, the Opposition can only hope to function effectively at the local and regional levels. Legislature-wise, however, it also functions at the national level and performs a very useful role in the maintenance of the system. It should be noted here that thanks to the heritage of parliamentary traditions, which are further reinforced by the conventions established by the leaders of the national movement in the Indian Parliament, the Opposition is given an importance which is out of proportion to its size. This, in turn, helps sustain the morale and activity of the Opposition in spite of there being a slender chance of its coming to power. Also, certain important leaders of

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ministers, and PCC chiefs was entrusted to Mr Kamaraj. After meeting them all informally he conveyed to the Parliamentary Party, over whose meeting he was requested to preside, his finding that Mr Shastri enjoyed the support of the majority among the MPs and among the other elements in the party. The Parliamentary Party accepted this finding and elected Mr Shastri as its leader by a unanimous vote.

[10] The analogy with the thermostat underlines the absorbent, self-corrective, and flexibility functions of factionalism.

the Opposition are given considerable personal importance by the ruling group in the Congress, thus preventing frustration and bitterness from taking undesirable forms. At the same time, this creates a wide gap between the leadership and the rank and file in the Opposition, shielding and protecting the former from the radicalism of the latter.

Apart from this relationship within the national political elite, however, the Opposition in India is, for all practical purposes, a regional phenomenon. Even the 'national' parties are loose coalitions of state parties, which explain the great heterogeneity within opposition parties, and the constant problem of enforcing discipline from above. The second structural implication is that the Opposition is fragmented and greatly divided. Because they are basically not parties of consensus but parties of pressure, they present an inchoate front. This is another important reason why sectional parties, such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the different tribal parties and various language parties and coalitions, and certain parties that are essentially sectional such as the Communists in Kerala and earlier in Andhra, and the Jana Sangh and Swatantra in certain areas, are much more successful in opposition. Again, however, both the positive stimulation of parliamentary experience and the negative contribution of Congress weakening in parts of the country has set up a corrective trend to such a structure of pressure: the Opposition parties too are found to contain a wide variety of social groups. There is also a greater secular involvement of sectional groups which will help in the articulation of the Opposition.[11] But the emergence of a second party of consensus is not anywhere in the offing. We shall return to this point when we consider below the emerging trends.

What we have discussed so far provides no more than a tentative definition and description of the one party dominance system as it operates in India. We do not propose in this paper to suggest explanatory hypotheses for the emergence and development of such a system as we are more concerned here with the logic of its operation and its consequent impact on the framework in which

[11] For an account of the movement in which caste associations are getting involved in the total political process, see the article by Rajni Kothari and Rushikesh Maru, 'Caste and Secularism in India: A Case Study of the Gujarat Kshatriya Sabha', *Journal of Asian Studies.*

political and institutional development is taking place. However, we may touch briefly upon the historical and environmental context in which the system has developed, as this may help in bringing out its more peculiar elements.

It is important to bear in mind that the Congress took root and came to political power not as a political party but as a movement for independence and reform. What is important is the long duration and organization of the movement and the forms it took. Established in 1885, and passing through a long phase of intellectual agitation during which its goals were articulated, it was transformed during the 1920s and 1930s into a mass movement that acquired depth and traditions. This meant two things. Encompassing as it did all the major sections and interests of society, it acquired a stamp of legitimacy and came to represent what we have called a 'historical consensus'. But this also meant that its structure was firmly laid out and the conditions of its competence determined. It was as a distinctive political elite organized in the form of a well-knit movement spread in large areas and along a hierarchy of levels—district, Pradesh, and all-India—that the Congress acquired its identity. It is true that it was not built in the form of a modern bureaucracy as has been the case with various socialistic and communist parties, but it remained nonetheless a powerful movement with a discipline and a strong commitment to goals. It is this that determined the organizational ideology of the Congress, which still continues, and of which the 'Kamaraj Plan' is the latest and most characteristic echo.

Second, the Congress was from the beginning committed to a democratic ideology, a stand from which it never wavered in spite of a good deal of 'anti-Western' feeling and a certain speculative nostalgia for a utopia in the past. Even the latter underlined the democratic inclinations of the leadership: it was not traditional kingship, but panchayati raj (significantly translated later on as 'democratic decentralization') that was the point of reference. Similarly, freedom of speech and tolerance of opposition (indeed the necessity of opposition) were cardinal principles of the movement's ideology of political modernization. Non-violent nationalism and intellectual pacifism further underlined the same democratic orientation. All this ensured the democratic and competitive character of the intellectual climate in which the party system developed in India, again setting it apart from the

'one-party' models of many other countries. The model of a one party state was anathema to the Congress from the beginning.

Historical reasons are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the efficacy of a system. There is no doubt that in its character and depth, the Congress was an unparalleled movement for independence, and this has significantly contributed to the present place of the Congress organization in India. But it was the consolidation that followed independence that really determined the present features of the system. Moreover, there were peculiar environmental features that not only confirmed the Congress in a position of unrivalled power but considerably added to its strength and crystallized it in concrete terms. It is often said that with the coming of independence, the Congress ceased to be a movement and turned into a political party. This is a misreading of the reality of the Indian political situation, for even after independence, the Congress continued to be a movement. Having acquired independence from foreign rule, it has now to build a nation. It is this charter of modernization through nation-building that has determined many of the present characteristics of the Indian party system. In this respect, it resembles the various official and *movement* parties found in the communist and non-communist developing nations, without, however, taking on their authoritarian features. It is in terms of a movement based on a consensus developed through the operation of free institutions, while at the same time restraining the excesses of partisan struggle, that the Congress has achieved its post-independence character. Let us look briefly at the main features of the system as it operates today.

The Congress, when it came to power, assigned a positive and overwhelming role to government and politics in the development of society. Second, it made the power of the central authority the chief condition of national survival. This power was not only consolidated but greatly augmented. Third, it made legitimacy the principal issue of politics and gave to the government and the ruling party an importance of great symbolic value. 'Only the Congress could be trusted.' This is why only the Congress was the party of consensus. The political system got legitimized through identification with a particular leadership, and its agents and heirs. This made the symbolism of the Congress so concrete and manifest. Fourth, the Congress in power made for a concentration of resources, a monopoly of patronage, and a control of economic power which

crystallized the structure of its power and made competition with it a difficult proposition. Fifth, by adopting a competitive model of development, it made mobilization and public cooperation a function of political participation rather than of bureaucratic control and police surveillance. Only the Congress, with its huge organizational legacy, its leadership, and its control of institutional patronage, could provide such a framework of participation.

Similarly, the broadening of the social and ideological base of the Indian polity depended upon the broadening of opportunities within the Congress as it would be suicidal for new sections and interests to join an opposition party and invite the hostility of the ruling party. Indeed, it has been repeatedly observed that even when the grievances of particular sections have been successfully ventilated through agitations launched by the opposition parties, the result has been that these elements have been absorbed into the ranks of the Congress which only stood to gain from the bargain: a truly tragic plight for the Opposition.[12] The fact that the consensus represented by the Congress has come not only out of historical legacy but also a continuing accommodation of interests is not out of any intellectual alertness or breadth of vision on part of Congressmen. The Congress has been hard on many groups, has generally been conservative on the question of admitting new recruits, has given in only when it must, and has usually gained in the bargain. But the situation is such that it confirms the Congress more and more in its position of the party of consensus. In places where it has failed to accommodate entrenched or newly emergent groups, it has not occupied such a position and has been defeated by dissident or opposition groups.[13]

[12] Thus as a result of the powerful agitation for linguistic states in Maharashtra and Gujarat, new cadres of workers were drawn into the political arena. Soon after the successful culmination of the agitation, however, the Congress absorbed a large number of the new entrants and succeeded in capturing full initiative in state politics. Similarly, in Punjab, Congressmen who had left the party and organized a new opposition group during the agitation against Chief Minister Kairon have rejoined it following the formation of a new ministry under Mr Ram Kishen.

[13] See, for instance, the articles on Amroha, Farukkhabad, and Rajkot constituencies in which the Congress was defeated in 1963 by-elections, in Myron Weiner and Rajni Kothari (eds), *Voting Behaviour in India* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya).

A significant trend in political development in India is the growth of built-in constraints in the political system which have led to a containment of conflicts at points where excessive conflict is likely to disrupt the intricate balance on which the Congress system is based. An awareness seems to have grown in the leadership that whereas the mechanism of factions to which the Congress has given rise serves to make for mobility and leads to a fresh balance when one is called for, neither factionalism nor partisan struggle can be allowed to become endemic, and should be held in restraint. There has developed over the years a conciliation machinery within the Congress, at various levels and for different tasks, which is almost constantly in operation, mediating in factional disputes, influencing political decisions in the states and districts, and not infrequently backing up one group against another and utilizing the electoral and patronage systems in confirming the former in a position of power. Apart from resolution of conflicts and interference in the outcome of conflicts, there is also a growing tendency towards avoidance of conflicts from taking an express form at certain levels, such as the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) or the general meeting of the PCC. This has been made possible by the growth of several buffers in the form of smaller executive committees, informal consultative committees, and 'inner groups' in the leadership.

The trend is also noticeable outside the ruling party. Thus the significant development in the working of the Indian Parliament is the growing importance of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP), on the one hand, and various functional committees of the Parliament, on the other, in legislative and political decision-making. Consultation between leaders of various parties on key business issues and the development of State Committees in the CPP are further extensions of the pivotal role of the Committee system in the making of parliamentary consensus. Similarly, in the Council of Ministers the latest trend is the appointment of experts and 'non-controversial' figures to key ministerial positions. Even among the politician ministers, conflict and controversy appear to have been restricted through the emergence of an inner group in the form of a 'collective' and the avoidance of abstract issues through the elimination of the 'ideologues' from important positions. In other spheres, there has either already taken place or a demand is being made for autonomy and non-political

functioning. Thus in civil–military relationships, the military is given more and more autonomy on its internal administration, as well as in the making of policy, thus making for a relationship of mutual confidence and trust and for a high state of morale and respect for civilian authority. Similar pleas for autonomy and 'professionalism' are being made for the Planning Commission and the nationalized industries. These are all developments leading to a limitation of the sensitive zone of factional politics, without any attempt to limit political participation, or restrict the right to criticize the government or articulate public opinion to censure it on particular failures or shortfalls. They constitute no more than in-built correctives to a highly politicized structure of institutions through which the Congress system operates.

Such a position of the Congress had been further cemented by the policy of neutralizing some of the more important sources of cleavage and disaffection in the country. Thus the removal of feudalism, the linguistic reorganization of states, the energetic infiltration by Congressmen of labour unions coupled with protective legislation for labour, the removal of gross social inequalities by grant of special privileges to depressed sections of the community, and the firm suppression of all acts of violence, secession, and disaffection—all this has succeeded in neutralizing potential sources of political disaffection. All of this has been part of the Congress drive for legitimacy on the one hand and modernization on the other. Together, these features add up to a considerable strengthening of the party of consensus and a correspondingly problematic position for the opposition parties.

On the other hand such an impressive consolidation of power in the hands of the Congress has not led to authoritarianism because of the free working of the electoral process, the crystallization of the factional structure within the party of consensus, the critical pressures exercised by the opposition, and the general tendency of the leadership to preserve democratic forms, to respect the rule of law, to avoid undue strife, and to hold various elements together in some sort of a balance of interests. The Congress has also shown great sensitivity on the question of respect for minorities, including political minorities, accommodating them whenever possible, and in general pursuing a broad-based consensus on national politics. We have discussed these points earlier and they need not be repeated, except to once again emphasize the fact that

in the development and consolidation of the party of consensus, the role of the opposition has also been preserved, and that India has categorically rejected any authoritarian model of the party system in order to avoid dissidence and preserve unity. The one party dominance as found in India is thus radically different from the one party dominance as found in, say, Ghana. It is a dominance based on consensual authority and not simply on civil or military power.

In giving to the country and its institutions such strength and character, a critical role was played by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. Although it is easy to exaggerate his role and although it is doubtful what he could have accomplished had he not had the great inheritance of the national movement and its organization to stand upon, there is no doubt that but for Nehru and his long tenure in office, it would have been difficult to consolidate the gains of independence in the manner in which this has been done. Nehru's role has been two-fold. By the sheer force of his personality, he managed to hold the country together, to arrest disruptive forces, and to take to the road of modernization. By symbolizing a nation's unity in one man[14] for such a long time, India avoided the painful convulsions through which less fortunate new nations have had to pass. But far more important was Nehru's other and more concrete role of having given roots and legitimacy to the institutions adopted by the country as well as to the modern purposes to which they are put. He patiently and doggedly worked to this end. As we have argued elsewhere, the contribution of Nehru was not to have started a revolution but to have given rise to a consensus.[15] He provided the country's institutions with sufficient time to strike roots, and himself worked to that end by being their chief operator, and made acceptable to his countrymen certain critical values—the value of equality, the value of freedom, the value of the vote. Meanwhile, he concentrated power in himself and in his party and maintained some sort of balance, pinning his faith on the institutions of democracy but not allowing political conflict to take too sharp a form, in a

[14] Sisir Gupta, 'Some Aspects of the Problem of National Integration in India, Pakistan and Ceylon', *Parliamentary Studies*, vol. 8, nos 1 and 2, 1964.

[15] Rajni Kothari, 'The Meaning of Jawaharlal Nehru', *The Economic Weekly*, Special Number, July 1964.

sense drifting on and hoping for things to sort themselves out ultimately. Nehru was perhaps not too confident of the way things were shaping but his sense of power on the one hand and a sincere conviction about the efficacy of democratic institutions on the other were enough to allow India time to build a foundation.

In a sense, the Nehru period was an exceptional period in India's history, one that was so necessary, but not so normal. This had its effect on the working of the party system. While the Congress gained in strength owing to the various factors described above, Nehru in another way weakened the party by concentrating power in his own hands and through acting as if only he could hold the country together. Nehru allowed things to take their own shape in the states and at lower levels where the party organization often forced its way, but at the national level he stymied the growth of the organization. Such a discrepancy in institutional organization, however, could not last forever, especially in such a highly structured and powerful organization as the Congress. Towards the end of his tenure, therefore, Nehru agreed to a proposal which, while it confirmed his own unbridled power, also restored power and prestige to the Congress organization.

This proposal was the Kamaraj Plan.[16] While this scheme has attracted widespread attention and has been, in turn, made the subject of praise and ridicule, its real role has not been understood.

[16] The Kamaraj Plan was adopted by the AICC on 10 August 1963. The resolution incorporating it was moved by Mr K. Kamaraj, who was then the Chief Minister of Madras and seconded by Mr S. K. Patil, the then minister for Food and Agriculture at the Centre. The chief idea of the plan was to secure the voluntary relinquishment of their ministerial posts by senior Congressmen to enable them to devote all their time to the organizational work of the party so that the 'unhealthy trend' noticeable in the formation of groups and factions in the party and the consequent 'loosening of the Congress organization' could be arrested.

Following the unanimous adoption of the resolution, all ministers at the Centre and the states submitted their resignations to the Working Committee which authorized Mr Nehru to decide which of the resignations would be accepted. On 24th August, Mr Nehru submitted to the Working Committee a list of names of six central cabinet ministers and six chief ministers who should be asked to take up organizational work. The Working Committee accepted his suggestion and recommended that the resignation of the 12 senior leaders be accepted. The Central Cabinet Ministers to leave under the Kamaraj

To consider the Kamaraj Plan in terms of its formally declared objectives is to misunderstand the purpose, as observers and columnists were not slow in seeing soon after announcement of the Plan.[17] At the same time, however, to have considered it simply in terms of a leadership purge, as was done by most of these writers, is also to have missed the point completely and to have taken an equally formal position. The importance of the Kamaraj Plan lay not in the immediate action taken, but in the sequel to it. It was not the removal 'for party work' of central ministers and chief ministers but the induction of party managers into positions of power at the national level which proved of greater consequence. By putting party managers into power, the Kamaraj Plan not only recognized their importance in national affairs but also restored to the central organization the prestige and importance it had lost over the years due to Nehru's dominating presence. Seen in this light, the Kamaraj Plan was no coup staged by adventurists; it was rather a 'restoration'.

To think that with the return to the government of men and who had been 'kamarajed' the purpose of the plan is defeated is to misunderstand the nature of the succession after Nehru; it is also to misunderstand the nature of the change that has come once again in ministerial-organizational relations at the Centre. That important leaders should leave the government and look after the organization was relevant in a situation where the organization had been weakened by those who were in government. It is no longer relevant when the organization is restored to its previous position and is granted its due place in the decision-making process of politics. It is this that has now come about after the death of Nehru. The struggle between Lal Bahadur Shastri and Morarji

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Plan were Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jagjivan Ram, S. K. Patil, B. Gopala Reddy and Dr K. L. Shrimali. Among the six chief ministers whose resignations the Working Committee accepted were K. Kamaraj of Madras, Biju Patnaik of Orissa, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed of Kashmir, UP's C. B. Gupta, Bihar's Binodanand Jha and B. A. Mandloi of Madhya Pradesh.

[17] K. Santhanam, 'Can Kamaraj Plan Provide All the Answers', *The Hindustan Times*, 14 August 1963; Krishna Bhatia, 'Congress Party Proposes a Major Toning Up', *The Statesman*, 15 August 1963; 'Go Back to the People', Editorial, *Eastern Economist*, vol. 41, no. 10, September 1963; Romesh Thaper, 'Congress Re-Birth or Hara Kiri?', *The Economic Weekly*, vol. 15, no. 35, 31 August 1963.

Desai over the succession issue was at the same time a struggle between two principles of party organization. In the outcome, the importance of the organization (alongside the ministry) has been established as a cardinal principle of the system. It is a principle that is an essential part of the one party dominance system as it operates in India, and one that distinguishes it from both the party system of Western democracies, and the one party systems found in many of the new nations, in both of which the party organization is considered instrumental to the executive. In the Western democracies, the subsidiary role given to party organization ensures unity in the party and is functional to the two-party system. In the authoritarian and 'solidarity' regimes also it ensures unity of the regime and keeps factionalism from going too far. In the Indian system, however, where a strong and potentially monolithic party must provide its own correctives to its power if it is to function democratically, the positive role of the party organization becomes a necessity.

We have now seen in detail the main features of the one party dominance system and the historical and environmental conditions under which it developed. It is a system that provides, among other things, a comprehensive mechanism of change (unlike the Western party systems, it is within the same party; unlike the 'one-party system' it is not through a *coup d'etat*), a system of conflict articulation and resolution (through the operation of the margin of pressure, both internal and external), and a system of communications between society and politics (through the factional network). It has worked rather well so far. It has its problems too, some of them serious, for it is still an evolving system and greatly dependent at the present stage on performance in other spheres. As for the trends in operation, as mentioned earlier, it is quite possible that the opposition parties will gain from the Congress in certain areas, but this is an inherent and necessary part of the system. Where the Congress has really lost grip, the opposition may even be able to form a government in one or more states. Only if this happens on a large scale, and percolates to the Centre, however, can the system be said to have undergone a major change. Even in that case, the question remains whether the new party or coalition provides us with another party of consensus or is just an expression of accumulated protest on the part of the public likely to wither away after a short time in office.

Lastly, there is the important theoretical question: What constitutes a stable party system? If still in transition, when does the real take-off come? Is it necessary that an 'alternative government' in the form of another party of consensus should emerge? Or is stabilization of elite competition, including smooth changes in government, as found in the Congress system in India, also a satisfactory condition of political organization?

The one party dominance system in India, with its factions and its support and communications networks, may yet well be a transitional system, suited for the special period of national growth, but one that would transform into a more 'normal' party system later on. This can be left as an open question. Either through a purposive coalition of dissident and opposition groups or through some sharp break within the Congress, or perhaps through the independent strengthening of one of the opposition parties, such a change may come in the future. Or, for all we know, the delicate balance on which the legitimacy and power of the Congress system rests may be rudely disturbed, and a more authoritarian system might emerge. Political systems do change in their nature over time, and there is no particular sanctity in one particular system. Meanwhile, the system of one party dominance described by us here is an interesting addition to the present typology of party systems, and one that is also, on Indian experience, a viable model of political organization.[18]

[18] For an earlier attempt at describing this system, see the author's 'Party System', *The Economic Weekly*, 3 June 1961. While sending this article to press, however, we also notice that W. H. Morris-Jones has developed a similar concept of 'one dominant party'. See his 'Parliament and Dominant Party: Indian Experience', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 3, Summer 1964. The analysis presented by us, however, differs from that analysis in certain respects, especially in the characterization of the Congress as the party of consensus.

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Social Cleavages, Elections, and the Indian Party System[+]

PRADEEP K. CHHIBBER
JOHN R. PETROCIK

To the social cleavage theory of party systems, the Indian parties, especially the Congress party, are anomalous. Religion, language, caste, class, and ethnic differences fragment Indian society into many groups which make relatively complete claims on individuals; yet, one party—the Congress—claims a large share of the electorate. It seems unlikely that most students of the structure and development of parties in other mass democracies would have predicted, in the case of India, the dominance of the Congress. In the western experience, religious, economic, ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences provided social cleavages around which organizations, especially political ones, developed.[1] How extensively and completely social differences aligned with party support varied with the number, salience and centrality, and political significance of the cleavages.[2] In some cases, social differences were

[+] Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy (eds), *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990).

[1] See R. A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Opposition in Western Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); J. Lapalambara and Myron Weiner (eds), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966); and S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction', in S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan (eds), *Party System and Voter Alignments* (New York: Free Press, 1967).

[2] G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

keenly felt, there were few competing commitments and social differences coincided with and also reinforced each other producing a sense of separateness. Usually, in these societies, social and political organizations closely followed demographic fault lines: the membership of a party as well as its support were drawn from a few groups, sometimes only one. Societies with less acute social divisions gave rise to a less aligned party system.[3] In these systems, the supporters of any given party were religiously, ethnically, racially, linguistically, and economically heterogeneous; no group, however, defined or represented more than a fraction of a party's supporters.[4]

Our analysis will demonstrate that the Congress party is as fractured as the social cleavage theory of party systems would predict from the heterogeneity of Indian society. The Congress is a coalition of state and local parties which differ substantially among themselves in the groups and interests they represent. Indeed, in terms of its supporters the Congress is several parties, with a social base in some parts of the country that is at odds with its social foundations in other regions. Looked at from the national level, Congress supporters represent a variety of social classes, occupational groups, religions, and languages. But community by community (and to a lesser extent state by state), the electoral support of the Congress is quite homogeneous. At the local level, the Congress and its opposition mobilize the economic and social conflicts of India as fully as the parties of the classic consociational democracies of Western Europe—for example, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, or Luxembourg—have reflected the religious, language, and class cleavages of their societies.

Therefore, to describe the Congress as a heterogeneous national party (the usual generalization), representing all groups, is formally accurate but substantively misleading. The Congress is neither a

[3] An 'aligned' party system here refers to party systems in which there is strong correlation between social and demographic variables and party preference, by 'less aligned' we mean to indicate weak correlations.

[4] See R. Rose and D. W. Urwin, 'Persistence and Change in Western Party System since 1945', *Political Studies*, vol. 18, September 1970; A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978); and G. B. Powell, *Contemporary Democracies* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press).

centre party nor is it a 'party of consensus'.[5] Our model of the Congress conceives of it as a coalition of state (and ultimately local) groups, whose political rationale are the divisions and conflicts of the state and community in question. The national Congress is 'organized into mutually exclusive factional coalitions which tend to nucleate around a dominant leader or faction which has its own regional base of political support'.[6] The divisions of Indian society are clearly evident at the sub-national level, where mass political mobilization occurs. They are lost at the national level, allowing the Congress to appear (inaccurately) as a heterogeneous, centre 'party of consensus'. The remainder of this paper details this phenomenon and considers the implications of our model, beginning with the data often used to document the heterogeneity of Indian society and Congress dominance.

Social Diversity and Conflict

India is arguably the most socially heterogeneous nation-state of modern times. It contains every major religion in the world, and a good many minor ones. In addition to 550 million Hindus, the population numbers 75 million Muslims, 13 million Sikhs, 16 million Christians (of several denominations), 5 million Budhists, 3 million Jains, and uncounted millions in small sects which are offshoots of the major groups.[7] The 1961 Census identified 1652 mother-tongues,[8] many of which provided for differences within religious communities. Among the many Hindu linguistic divisions there are thousands of *jatis*, or caste divisions, each

[5] Rajni Kothari, 'The Congress "System" in India', *Asian Survey*, 4/12 (December, 1964).

[6] Richard Sisson, *The Congress Party in Rajasthan: Political Integration and Institution-building in an Indian State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972) and Francine R. Frankel, 'Compulsion and Social Change. Is Authoritarianism the Solution to India's Economic Development Problems?', in Atul Kohli (ed.), *The State Development in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[7] *Statistical Outline of India, 1986–87* (Bombay: Tata Consultancy Services, 1986).

[8] Jyotirindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), p. 33.

forming an autonomous unit of reference for social action of its members.[9]

Social and political conflict occurs along these social divisions. The many religions, languages, ethnic and tribal groups, castes, and classes of India provide friction-points which frequently become occasions for inter-group conflict. During the 1980s, religion has provided a basis for the struggle of the Sikhs in Punjab; in Uttar Pradesh the Hindu claims to a temple within a mosque sparked widespread Hindu–Muslim riots; violence erupted over the status of the Konkani language in Goa, and Tamil Nadu experienced a re-emergence of anti-Hindi agitations. Ethnic identity helped fuel the Naga and Mizo insurrections and the Gorkha demand for a separate state. Caste 'wars' were prevalent in Bihar, with castes such as the Bhumihars, Rajputs, Kurmis, and Yadavs forming *senas* to protect their caste and economic interests. In western India, farmers agitated for better terms of trade through the Shetkari Sangathan.

This litany of divisions and disputes are too easy to exaggerate. The uniqueness of India is not in the existence of these conflicts—equivalent social differences have occasioned inter-group conflict in most societies throughout history—but in the variety of salient differences: castes within religions, language within class, class within religion.[10] Each, in combination with others, has provided social boundaries which many Indians find difficult to cross.

[9] This diversity is illustrated by Powell in *Contemporary Democracies*, op. cit., p. 45, who, citing data from the 1972 World Handbook, notes that the ethnic variety of India is so great that one has only an 11 per cent chance of picking two individuals at random and finding them to be of a similar ethnic group. (In the US, a random selection of two persons has a 50 per cent chance of selecting two people from the same ethnic linguistic group.)

[10] While it is true that castes are particularly prevalent and engrained among Hindus, there is evidence to show that Muslims and Sikhs too are caste conscious. Caste among the Muslims and Sikhs does not have the structural characteristics that the Hindu caste system does, but it nevertheless does provide for a measure of common identity, which is sufficient to provide grounds for differential political mobilization. For example studies on the Punjab crisis have shown the Jat–Sikh dominance of the Akali Dal. Systematic sociological evidence for caste among non-Hindus can be found in H. Singh, *Caste among Non-Hindus in India* (New Delhi: National, 1977).

The Heterogeneity and Dominance of the Congress

At first glance the Congress surmounts these divisions by representing all of them. Consider the 1971 general elections: Indira Gandhi appealed across 'regional, parochial and caste lines with a direct class appeal to "abolish poverty"'.[11] The subsequent success of the Congress was attributed to its having forged a distinctive coalition of the disadvantaged, especially among the Harijans, Muslims and the Scheduled Tribes.[12] In reality, as in earlier and later elections, the Congress drew majority support from every class, every religion, and every caste (see Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1: Vote for the Congress by Social Cleavages, 1971
(in per cent)

Religion		Caste		Class	
Hindus	62	High status	64	*Rural areas*	
Muslims	74	Upper	53	Low	68
Sikhs	65	Merchant	57	Middle	62
Christians	52	Middle	65	High	65
Other religions	62	Upward mobile	54	*Urban areas*	
		Lower	58	Low	64
		Harijans	68	Middle	62
		Scheduled Tribes	62	High	53

The Congress received more support from Muslims (three out of four voted for the Congress) than from any other religious group, but its success was not built on an endorsement by Muslims.

[11] Frankel, 'Compulsion and Social Change' in Atul Kohli (ed.), *The State and Development in the Third World*, op. cit., p. 1967. The 1971 election was a particularly good one to study as in that election Indira Gandhi made a 'national appeal'. In such an instance we should have observed minimal regional variances in the vote. Apart from the substantive reasons, we could not use the 1967 survey, as the sampling unit for that survey was not the state but was instead the competitive nature of the constituency. The 1971 survey did use the state as a sampling unit. We did not choose the 1977 survey, for the election was special. Our results, however, hold across the three parliamentary elections of 1967, 1971, and 1977.

[12] L. I. Rudolph, 'Continuities and Change in Electoral Behaviours': The 1971 Parliamentary Election in India', *Asian Survey*, 11/12 (December).

The Sikhs, too, were supportive: 65 per cent voted Congress. The Hindus were not far behind at 62 per cent. Christians, Buddhists, and Jains did not vote as heavily for the Congress, but it is obvious from the data in Table 2.1 that the Congress was elected with majority support from every religious group.

Caste distinctions played even less of a role than religion in structuring the vote in 1971. Harijans voted most heavily for the Congress (68 per cent of the respondents favoured the Congress) but the other castes were not far behind. The high and middle status castes voted almost as heavily for the Congress as the Harijans (approximately 65 per cent). Clearly, no caste group alone formed the social foundation on which the Congress based its massive electoral majority in that election.[13]

The weak correlation of the vote with religion and caste is not evidence of the importance of class in 1971. Class was less correlated with the vote than either religion or caste, especially in the rural areas where over 60 per cent of all class groupings voted for the Congress. In the urban areas, the vote did vary with status: the Congress vote among high status urban dwellers was almost 10 percentage points below that of the middle and lower classes. Indira Gandhi's class appeal may be responsible for this difference. If a class appeal would be effective anywhere one would expect urban dwellers who are less physically, socially, and psychologically 'committed' into segmental cleavages 'such as religion and caste to be the most responsive to class appeals. But, that established, the most striking feature of the reported 1971 vote is how poorly it correlates with any of the social distinctions presented in Table 2.1. Support for the Congress is slightly above average with some groups and slightly below average with others. However, overall, inter-group differences are small. The occasional deviation from the average is too small to represent anything more than a modest departure from the essentially high support that the Congress received from all groups of voters.

As the Congress has managed to surmount the divisions of Indian society it has also achieved a commanding majority over

[13] There is evidence to show that the electoral coalition that formed the basis of Indira Gandhi's victory was not the minorities and the disadvantaged sectors, but that high caste, upper-status respondents in the rural sectors of the Hindi heartland voted at higher levels for the Congress than in any previous election.

all competitors. Across four decades since Independence, both in terms of the percentage of the vote received and the seats captured in parliament, the Congress has consistently dominated its rivals. Its opponents have never forged a stable challenge. As Table 2.2 indicates, no party or coalition was able to perform as the Congress' closest opponent in the first eight general elections. While some sharp-eyed observers have insisted that the support base of the Congress has become shallower,[14] and others have noted that the Congress has never mobilized more than a small minority of the potential electorate[15] there is no gainsaying the hegemony of the Congress.

TABLE 2.2: Parliamentary Election Results, 1952–84

(in per cent)

Election of party	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984
Congress	45.0	47.8	44.7	40.8	43.7	34.5	42.7	49.6
Second largest vote	10.6[1]	10.4[2]	9.9[3]	9.4[4]	10.4[5]	41.3[6]	19.0[7]	7.7[8]
Third largest vote	5.8[9]	8.9[10]	7.9[11]	8.7[12]	7.4[13]	4.3[14]	9.4[15]	7.0[16]

1 Socialist Party
2 Praja Socialist Party
3 Communist Party of India
4 Jana Sangh
5 Congress(O)
6 Janata Coalition
7 Janata Party
8 Bharatiya Janata Party
9 Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party
10 Communist Party of India
11 Swatantra Party
12 Swatantra Party
13 Bharatiya Jana Sangh
14 Communist Party of India (Marxist)
15 Janata Party (Secular)
16 Janata Party

These findings make clear what most students of India have understood: that despite a social order which has produced violent

[14] See L. I. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago, IL: University of Press, 1987) and 'Congress-I: Crumbling Citadel', *India Today*, 15 April 1987.

[15] W. G. Vanderbok, 'Contained Volatility: Political Alignments and Realignment in India', Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, 1987.

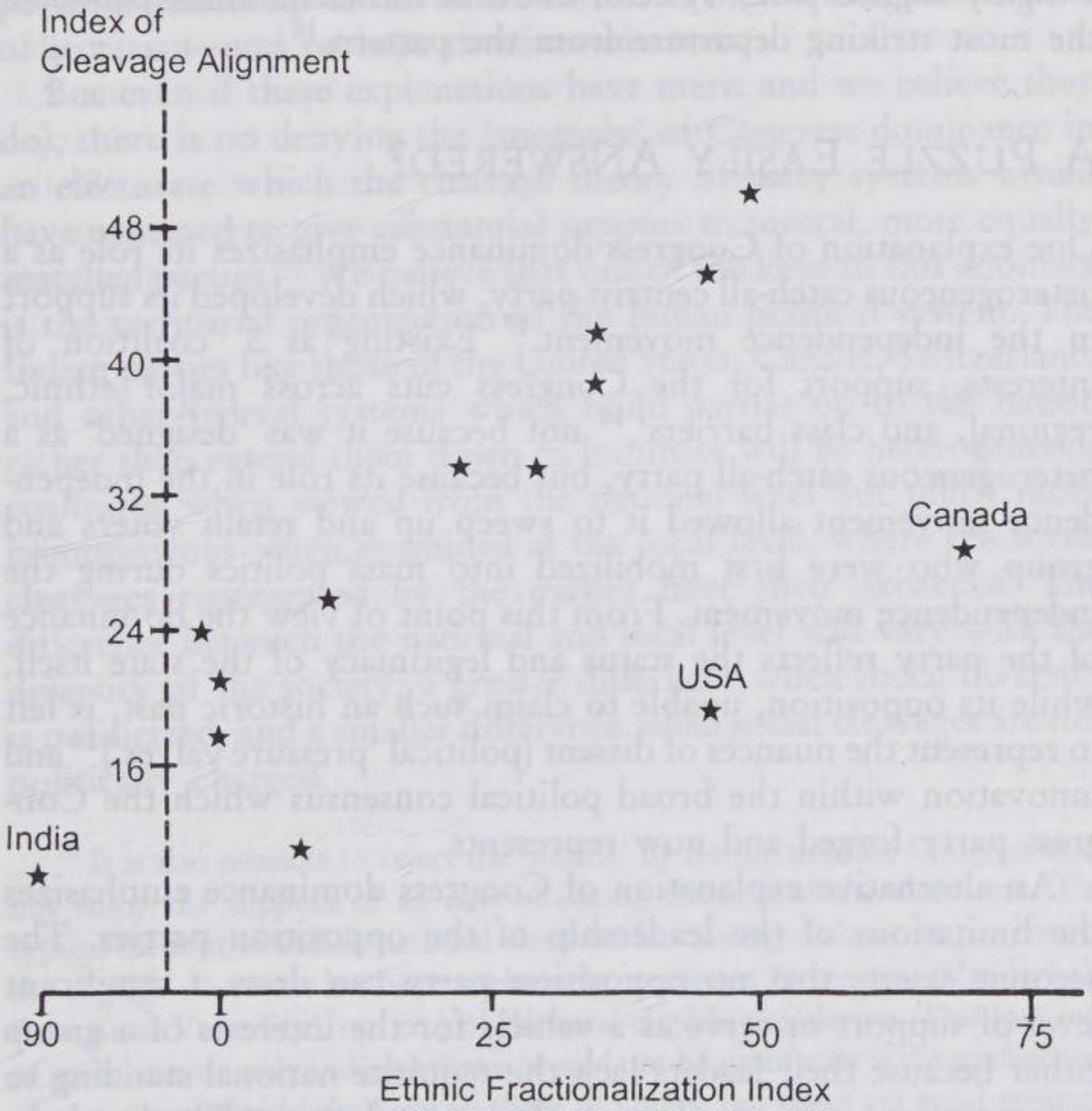

Fig. 2.1: Comparison of degree of cleavage alignments of the party system with the degree of ethnic fractionalization of the society.

conflicts along almost every possible social dimension, the Indian party system has, apparently, smothered the differences within the hegemonic Congress party. Neither religion, nor caste, nor class provide a base for Congress dominance. How substantially India departs from the norm is illustrated by Fig. 2.1 which compares a measure of alignments between social differences and party support with a measure of social diversity. The relationship is very strong: the most socially diverse societies produce the most homogeneous parties, that is, parties which are political vehicles for the competing groups which define the diversity. To be sure,

substantial social diversity is not necessary for the development of a highly-aligned party system, but it is sufficient. India produces the most striking departure from the pattern.[16]

A Puzzle Easily Answered?

One explanation of Congress dominance emphasizes its role as a heterogeneous catch-all centrist party, which developed its support in the independence movement.[17] Existing as a 'coalition of interests, support for the Congress cuts across major ethnic, regional, and class barriers',[18] not because it was 'designed' as a heterogeneous catch-all party, but because its role in the independence movement allowed it to sweep up and retain voters and group who were first mobilized into mass politics during the independence movement. From this point of view the dominance of the party reflects the status and legitimacy of the state itself, while its opposition, unable to claim such an historic past, is left to represent the nuances of dissent (political 'pressure valves')[19] and innovation within the broad political consensus which the Congress party forged and now represents.

An alternative explanation of Congress dominance emphasizes the limitations of the leadership of the opposition parties. The account asserts that no opposition party can draw a significant level of support or serve as a vehicle for the interests of a group either because their leaders lack the requisite national standing to become prime minister or are only power hungry. The break-up of the Janata coalition in 1979, for example, was widely attributed to the competing personal ambitions of the Janata leadership. A consistent, concerted Congress party initiative to project the Congress prime minister as the only national figure has reinforced

[16] Three nations are significant outliers: the United States, Canada, and, especially, India.

[17] Kothari, 'The Congress "System", in India', op. cit. Also see Chapter 1 of Richard Sisson and Ramashray Ray (eds), *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990).

[18] L. Diamond, S. M. Lipset and J. Linz, 'Developing and Sustaining Democratic Government in the Third World', paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1986.

[19] Kothari, 'The Congress "System" in India', op. cit., p. 1164 and Chapter 1.

the perception and opposition leaders are too constrained to offer political leadership to the entire nation as they are representatives of sectarian—and perhaps divisive—interests.

But even if these explanations have merit and we believe they do), there is no denying the 'anomaly' of Congress dominance in an electorate which the cleavage theory of party systems would have expected to give substantial support to several, more equally matched parties.[20] We believe that one of the keys to this anomaly is the territorial organization of the Indian political system. The Indian parties like those of the United States, Canada, Switzerland, and other federal systems which build parties up to the nation rather than extend them down to localities will be heterogeneous coalitions when viewed from the national level but much more homogeneous when examined at the local level, where the social cleavages represented by the parties have their existence. The difference between the national and local level will vary with the diversity of the society; a greater difference when social diversity is politicized, and a smaller difference when social cleavages are not politically charged.

[20] It is also possible to reject the 'puzzle' by noting that the Congress does not enjoy the support of an overwhelming fraction of the electorate. The typical turnout in Indian national elections has averaged about 54 per cent of the eligible electorate has been a relatively consistent 24 per cent (Vanderbok, Contained Volatility', op. cit.) of the total eligible population. This low rate of mobilization may indicate that it would not be significant if the preferences of non-voters divide similarly to those of voters, but there are good grounds to believe that they would not (see op. cit. Adam Przeworski, 'Institutionalization of Voting Patterns or is Mobilization the Source of Decay?', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 69, no. 1, March 1975, pp. 49–67). Second, it is probable that a large fraction of the Congress' 'success' in the Lok Sabha elections reflects the advantages of first parties in single member/simple plurality election systems. After the first two post-independence elections the SMSP (Single Member Simple Plurality) electoral system has given the Congress party a pre-eminent place with substantially less than 50 per cent of the turnout. Indeed, it is common to find the collective opposition vote exceeding that of the Congress candidate (see Vanderbok, 'Contained Volatility', op. cit.). Moreover, the Congress had approximately 80 per cent of the seats in the national Parliament, but it did not have electoral control in eight of the eighteen states that were covered in the 1971 post-election survey and form the basis of our analysis. With this in mind, attempts to explain Congress strength might be an account of a non-existent phenomenon.

An examination of the strength of the Congress party in terms of the cleavage theory of party systems, as it operates within the institutional structure of federalism, offers important insights into Indian politics. It formulates questions about the social base of the Congress party's support structure that, when answered, offer insights into (a) Congress party dominance; (b) the nature of the Congress party as a 'centre party of consensus'; (c) the corresponding fragmentation and weakness of Congress' opponents nationally; and (d) the present 'bifurcation'[21] of the party system.

The Territoriality of Social Cleavages in India

Religious communities, castes and sub-castes, and kin groups provide the individual with a reference for social action. Language is the social link within the group: members of linguistic groups share a common mode of speech, a common history, and a common way of life. Language, by possessing 'historical homelands' under the linguistic reorgnization of the states in 1956, intensified the political salience of geographical boundaries by giving them linguistic-religious-caste-ethnic dimensions. Geography, in brief, became (and remains) as politicized as the 'segmental pluralism'[22] it encapsulated.

Equally important is the geographical specificity of inter-group conflicts. Because the states, and more so local communities, delimit the boundaries of inter-group competition, the identity and intensity with which groups oppose each other vary by community and state. Consider, for example, the purely local dimension of inter-caste competition.[23] It is a unique state-specific quiltwork of conflict: in Tamil Nadu conflict divided Brahmin and non-Brahmin, while in Rajasthan it was Rajput versus Jat, and in Andhra Pradesh the Kamma and Reddy feud. The resolution of a caste polarization does not do away with caste conflict, new ones replace them much as the conflicts between Kshatriyas and Patidars in Gujarat supplanted divisions between Baniya–Brahmin and

[21] L. I. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, op. cit.

[22] V. Lorwin, 'Segmented Pluralism: Ideological Cleavages and Political Cohesion in the Smaller European Democracies', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 4, no. 2, January 1971.

[23] L. I. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph.

Patidars.[24] In brief, caste, while a feature of national political life, is politically meaningful at the local level.[25]

As mass parties represented groups and appealed to voters in terms which evoked meaningful concerns, segmental divisions such as caste acquired a partisan significance. They were (and remain) a natural basis for mobilizing votes. Every party, the avowedly communal and those who ideologically oppose such vertical segmentation—like the communists—turned to segmental cleavages such as caste[26] to mobilize electoral support. Inter-state differences in the nature of cleavages—religion in some places, caste in others, and different castes even where caste was important—created inter-state differences in the social alignment of the same party. In Rajasthan, for example, the Congress drew more support from the Jats while the Rajputs were represented by the opposition.[27] In neighbouring Haryana the Lok Dal depended for its electoral successes largely on the Jats while the Congress drew support from Punjabi Hindus and upper castes.

Consequently, a national party like the Congress has an exceptionally heterogeneous social base when looked at from the

[24] Rajni Kothari, 'Introduction: Caste in Indian Politics', in Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970), p. 24.

[25] There is both sociological and electoral evidence to substantiate our assertion that religious differences do not travel well across regional boundaries. Harold Gould's study of Faizabad in 'Religion and Politics in a U.P. Constituency', in Donald E. Smith (ed.), *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966) illustrates that electoral mobilization operates along local communal lines—the level and point of inter-group conflict—and not along national ones. Secondly, the 1971 post-election survey results provide further evidence of this phenomenon. In the 'Hindi heartland' Muslims living in the urban areas voted 16 percentage points over their rural counterparts for the Congress (79 per cent to 63 per cent). Not only that, only half of all Muslims in the south voted Congress, whereas the corresponding percentages for the west and the east are 91 and 84 respectively. In no other region of India but the north do we really find evidence of this urban–rural divide among the Muslims, though this could be in part due to the not so large samples in other areas. Further corroborative evidence can be found in Table 2.5.

[26] M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966).

[27] Richard Sisson, 'Caste and Political Factions in Rajasthan', in Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970).

perspective of the nation; when looked at state by state, however, the Congress—no less than its opponents—has a more clearly definable, and homogeneous, clientele. As Sisson[28] observed in Rajasthan '...caste-based political units have existed only at the municipal and tehsil levels. At the district, divisional and State levels, this field of political units has been divided; alignments have taken the forms of two opposing factional coalitions...'. It is, therefore only at the national level that the Congress appears to be a 'catch-all' party of 'national consensus'.

Consequences for the Party System

We should, given the territorial nature of social cleavages in India, expect that:

1. Viewed at the national level, where a voter lives—that is, his or her state—should be a far stronger predictor of the vote than caste, religion, or social class. The link between these social factors and party preference is not uniform when looked at from the level of the nation, while the state focus of the party system ensures a greater degree of homogeneity.

2. However, because caste, class, and religion are major points of conflict within India, each will have a strong correlation with party support when examined at the level at which these social factors are politically significant, that is, by state.

3. The political significance of group conflicts vary by state so the strength of the link between social difference and party should vary across the states.

4. The heterogeneity of the Congress reflects variation among the states in commitments of the Congress party to the inter-group conflicts. Consequently, there will be considerable state by state variation in the social groups which are aligned with the Congress party.

The Regional Basis of Congress Support

The data in Table 2.3 confirm the first expectation: support for the Congress is structured by the state far more than it is by caste or class. As the model predicts, religion, caste, and class turn out

[28] Ibid., p. 219.

to be poor predictors of the Congress vote at the national level. Religion and class each accounted for about 1 per cent of the variance in the Congress vote; class was the poorest indicator among the traditional cleavages, able to explain less than one-half of 1 per cent of the variance in the Congress vote. State, by contrast, explained over 26 per cent of the variance in the Congress vote. Clearly, regional differences are critical for understanding the dynamics of mass support for the Congress.

TABLE 2.3: Per cent Variance of Congress Vote Accounted for 1971

Social deavage	
Caste	1.16
Religion	0.90
Class	0.30
Caste, religion, and class	2.00
State	26.10

Table 2.4 confirms the second prediction of our interpretation of the Congress party: the political significance of these social cleavages is a state-specific feature of Indian politics. When looked at from the level of the state, the Congress is not a heterogeneous, catch-all party but a party of representation in a divided society. Consider the data: The zero-order correlation between the Congress vote and religion, caste, and class is , for the nation as a whole, 0.10, 0.11, and 0.05 respectively. The ability of these variables, taken together, to explain the variance in the Congress vote is quite poor. Collectively, they account for 2 per cent of the variance when looked at without regard to the state in which the individual lives.

Within each state, however, the zero-order correlations, with only a couple of exceptions, are substantially higher than the national figures, and provide strong evidence for their importance as a determinant of support for the Congress despite the low cross-state correlations reported in Table 2.3. The average within-state correlation between religion and party was twice as large as the corresponding national figures (0.19 compared to 0.10); the average within-state correlation between caste and Congress support was 0.30 (the across-state value was 0.11); for class it was 0.17 (compared to a national, across-state coefficient of 0.05).

TABLE 2.4: Within-State Correlations and Analysis of Variance Results

State	Zero-order correlations			Per cent variance explained	Cases
	Religion	Caste	Class		
Andhra Pradesh	0.14	0.22	0.20	10	232
Assam	0.29	0.69	0.14	51	71
Bihar	0.08	0.30	0.05	8	233
Gujarat	0.30	0.29	0.25	18	299
Haryana	0.16	0.76	0.45	58	46
Himachal Pradesh	–	0.14	–	–	21
Jammu and Kashmir	0.17	–	0.38	15	76
Kerala	0.17	–	0.15	5	198
Madhya Pradesh	0.23	0.24	0.04	10	290
Maharashtra	0.22	0.28	0.04	14	215
Karnataka	0.09	0.29	0.14	10	229
Orissa	–	0.58	0.21	35	94
Punjab	0.28	0.30	0.27	15	173
Rajasthan	0.10	0.45	0.19	23	143
Tamil Nadu	0.12	0.37	0.06	15	218
Uttar Pradesh	0.21	0.11	0.04	7	444
West Bengal	0.10	0.24	0.08	10	177
Delhi	0.23	0.39	0.31	24	127
Average across states	0.19	0.30	0.17	19	
National figures	0.10	0.11	0.05	2	

Third, not only are the within-state correlations between the Congress vote and social cleavages much larger than the national, across-state values, but they also, as predicted (Table 2.4), vary among the states. Religion correlates more highly with the Congress vote in Assam (0.29) Gujarat (0.30) and Punjab (0.28) than it does in, for example, Karnataka (0.09), Rajasthan, (0.10) and West Bengal (0.10). Caste follows a similar pattern. In Haryana (where the correlation is 0.76), Assam (0.69), and Orissa (0.58) it is a much stronger predictor of the Congress vote than in Uttar Pradesh (0.11). The partisan relevance of religion, caste, and class also varies amongst the states. They played a larger role in Congress support in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana than in Madhya Pradesh or Maharashtra, where the Congress vote seems to have little to do with whatever class difference exists. In Haryana (where the Scheduled Castes account for 58 per cent of the variance in the

vote), these social differences seem to be highly politicized cleavages; they play less of a role in structuring the Congress vote in Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh (where they account for 10 or less than 10 per cent of the variance in the vote), exactly the results one would expect if the configuration of forces within a state not only determine what divisions will be represented by the parties, but how fully they will be represented.

Finally, consistent with the fourth prediction of the model, the configuration of support for the Congress by religion, caste, and class varies among the states (Table 2.5). Consider the Muslims: in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat their support for the Congress far exceeded the average in those states. In Tamil Nadu, by contrast, they voted 8 percentage points *below* the average Congress vote of the other religious groups. In Bihar their support for the Congress was 6 percentage points *above* the state average. The same trend can be seen among Harijans, though their support for the Congress did not vary as much across states as that of the Muslims. Harijans usually, but not always, turned out for the Congress party at the state average, in Rajasthan, they voted more heavily for the Congress than they did in any other state. The Scheduled Tribes, on the other hand, voted well below the state average in Madhya Pradesh. The high status castes, were generally less supportive of the Congress, except in Uttar Pradesh where they voted as heavily for the Congress as the rest of the state. Interestingly, there was not much variance among classes in their support for the Congress, except in Gujarat where the upper class voted thirty points below the state mean for the Congress.

Conclusion

The implication of this account of the linkage between the cleavages of Indian society and the Congress party is straightforward: the electoral support of the Congress depends upon a definite social basis, but one that varies from state to state. Any aggregation at the national level masks a cleavage alignment which is almost precisely what the social cleavage theory of party systems expects to find. With the link between party preference and social differences calculated as an average of the correlations within the states, India ceases to be an outlier in terms of the cleavage theory of party systems.

TABLE 2.5: Per cent for Average State Vote for the Congress 1971

Social cleavage	Karnataka	Uttar Pradesh	Bihar	Madhya Pradesh	Gujarat	Tamil Nadu	Rajasthan
High caste	–	0.00	–0.14	0.03	–0.13	–0.08	–
Upper caste	0.07	–	–	–	–	0.08	–
Merchant caste	–	–0.05	–	–0.02	–	–	–
Middle caste	–0.10	–	–	–	–	0.20	0.07
Upwardly mobile caste	–	–0.07	0.12	–	–0.21	–0.08	–
Lower caste	–0.04	–0.15	–0.11	–0.07	0.04	–0.04	–
Harijans	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.10	0.05	0.03	0.23
Scheduled tribes	–	–	–	–0.18	0.00	–	–
Muslims	–	0.25	0.06	–	0.22	–0.08	–
Classes							
Low	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.12
Middle	–0.04	–0.01	–0.02	0.00	0.04	0.00	–0.07
High	0.01	–0.02	–0.03	–0.03	–0.30	0.04	–0.02

Note: The figures in the table are the per cent deviations of the social groups from the average vote for Congress in the state.

The Congress emerges as a party that represents not national but local interests. It is not a centre party, nor is it a party of consensus. It is a collection of state-based factions linked not by a common constituency but by élites who co-operate in the pursuit of office. The Congress is not a heterogeneous party in the normal sense of that concept. It is a heterogeneous pre-election coalition of substantially homogeneous parties which are rooted in salient, local conflicts. The Congress' role in the independence movement and the formation of the nation-state has given ambitious political leaders an incentive to be Congress without, at the same time (except rarely and under unusual circumstances), imposing any programmatic demands which conflict with the symbolic and programmatic appeals they must make to rally the 'Congress' constituency in their state and locality. State-based leaders, even those important in the national government, represent conflicts and cleavages within their state. They represent these interests in the national party. The national party, however, is not a vehicle for state-based political forces. Its primary purpose has been to form a national government. This was made easy for the Congress, initially by its connection with the independence movement and is now facilitated by its identification with the nation-state.

The Congress party is similar to national parties in other federal systems, especially the Democratic Party in the United States. The range of issues which divide the Congress party probably exceeds those which unite it. Yet this pre-electoral coalition has persisted because the 'central' party has not forced a party line with regard to the groups or interests it does (or does not) represent. The state-based segments of the Congress do not negotiate a programme after every election (in the manner of post-election coalitions in, for example, Belgium, Holland, or Italy, three other societies marked by longstanding, and highly politicized, social cleavages). Under most circumstances, potential intra-party conflicts are never realized because cross-state movements which might disrupt the national coalition never confront each other at the local level where electoral politics are meaningful to Indian voters.

This result may also help to explain why no national opposition party has emerged in India. Each state has peculiar social cleavages that provide the basis of political support for the Congress and its opponents. Since these ascriptive cleavages do not translate

across states, the opposition parties do not have a consistent social basis for support across states; they are from constituencies that are limited by regional boundaries. The political momentum of the independence movement provides a national framework for the Congress. No comparable national opposition can emerge because there is no national position for any party to be able to oppose, and no regional opponent enjoys a national resource comparable to Congress' history as the party which brought independence.[29]

Second, the federal structure of the Indian polity is a critical variable in explaining Congress' dominance. By providing a territorial locus of power within which social cleavages may manifest themselves, in conjunction with the history of the independence movement, the possibility for concerted opposition to the Congress beyond the state level is limited. The 'bifurcation' of the party system[30] stands as evidence in favour of this thesis. Taking mid-1987 as a representative data-point, states in which the Congress was out of power were all governed by eight different parties: a Congress and National Conference alliance in Jammu and Kashmir; a faction of the Akali Dal in Punjab; the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu; the Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh; a local alliance in Assam; and the Janata Party in Karnataka. In West Bengal and Kerala, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] was in power, but even there the coalition that the CPI(M) had forged in each state was different. Where the Congress rules, there is no common opposition party present to pose a viable threat in all states.

It appears that the Congress will retain its place as the dominant actor at the national level, since the electoral success of the party depends not on its performance but on its continuing ability to be able to identify itself with the nation-state, which it can do as

[29] It could be argued that in 1977 there was a national position to oppose, and the various opposition parties did form a coalition. Even then, there was a clear north–south divide, with the southern states—Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu—opting in favour of the Congress or its allies, showing the regional basis of the Janata coalition. That the Janata Party leader Ramakrishna Hegde has now begun talking of a federation of opposition parties, instead of a united opposition, stands as testimony to the territoriality of the party system in India.

[30] Rudolph and Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi*, op. cit.

long as it holds power. There are, however, other possibilities. An alternative, under which a national opposition to the Congress can emerge, given the current socio-economic situation and the present policies of the Congress, is the creation of a mass movement against the policies of the Congress, which would carry a new party or coalition to power. The more probable scenario, however, is the persistence of a number of small parties in parliament, each based in a region or state, with the Congress as the largest, non-majority party. In that case, the party system could undergo a change, whose nature and direction would be contextually determined.

3

Mrs Gandhi's Pyramid: The New Congress[+]

STANLEY A. KOCHANEK*

The elections of 1971 and 1972 in India marked the restoration of Congress dominance at the Centre and in the states, a return to strong central leadership, and the apparent emergence of a more broadly based, ideologically coherent party. On the surface, the 'Indira wave' appeared to have restored the pattern of a one-party dominance that characterized the Nehru era. Yet a closer analysis reveals a distinctly different pattern of dominance that contributed to a severe political crisis in the midst of the gravest economic crisis in post-independence India. These simultaneous crises of political and economic performance threatened the legitimacy of the system and ended in the declaration of an internal Emergency in June 1975, the first such domestic Emergency since independence. The declaration of the Emergency, the decision to postpone elections scheduled for March 1976, and talk of revising the constitution mark the end of the political system that has existed since 1947 and the beginning of a new phase of Indian political development. What were the characteristics of the new pattern of Congress dominance? How did it differ from the period of centralization and convergence of the Nehru era? What were some of the inherent dilemmas or tensions of the new system? What were the consequences of these tensions and how were these

[+] Henry Hart (ed.), *Indira Gandhi's India* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Student Edition, 1976).

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consequences related to the declaration of the Emergency in June 1975? What were the implications of these developments for the Congress and the future of the Indian political system? In short, was the declaration of the Emergency in June 1975 a reversal of trends or the culmination of a process of systematic change?

Shape of the Indira Wave

Sources

The end of the Nehru era and the process of succession had resulted in the emergence of a collective leadership in the Congress and a decision-making process based on consensus. Unlike the centralized pattern under Nehru, the period from 1963–9 had been marked by divergence. Party leaders had pressed the prime minister and cabinet for a share of power, as had the chief ministers of the states, and major policies could be decided only with the assent of the state governments.[1] Lal Bahadur Shastri, Nehru's immediate successor, had shown a decision-making style and temperament that was well suited to these new circumstances.

Although the same combination of forces that had managed to smooth the succession of Shastri had managed a similarly successful, if not as smooth, succession of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the new prime minister had proved unwilling to accept the restraints imposed on Shastri.[2] The result had been six years of conflict, factional intrigue, and the first major split in the Congress at the national level since independence.[3] During her struggle for control over party and government from 1966 to 1972, Indira Gandhi had found herself challenged, or potentially threatened, by almost every major institutional structure in India, including the central

[1] For detailed discussion of the development of the Congress party from 1947 to 1968, see Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

[2] For a detailed discussion of the succession process in India, see Michael Brecher, *Nehru's Mantle: The Politics of Succession in India* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); and Brecher, 'Succession in India: The Routinization of Political Change', *Asian Survey*, vol. 7, July 1967, pp. 423–43.

[3] For details of the split, see A. M. Zaidi, *The Great Upheaval '69–'72* (New Delhi: Orientalia, 1972); and Mahendra Pratap Singh, 'The 1969 Split in the Indian National Congress', *Journal of the Society for Study of State Governments* vol. 7, January–March 1974, pp. 52–68.

cabinet, the president of the republic, the courts, the president of the Congress party, the Working Committee of the Congress, and the chief ministers of the states.

Design

In the course of meeting these challenges, Mrs Gandhi had promised to create a new political process, based on the restoration of strong central rule which had become eroded over the years since her father's death, and free from the evils of bossism. The new political process which Mrs Gandhi created, however, proved to be more highly centralized and personalized and less institutional than Nehru's. It had three major characteristics. First, it involved an unprecedented centralization of power in party and government with the prime minister at the top of the decision-making pyramid. Second, Mrs Gandhi made a major effort to modify the federal character of party and government by strengthening their unitary tendencies and thereby reinforcing the centralization of power. Third, she tried, unsuccessfully, to change the support base of the Congress from above by recruiting underrepresented sectors of society, such as youth, women, intellectuals, minorities, the backward castes and tribes, and the poor, into the party organization and into the Congress legislative parties.

Since the formal structure of power outlined in both the Indian constitution and the constitution of the Congress party was federal with strong unitary and centralizing features, the initiation of this new process did not require major structural change.[4] A new pattern of centralized dominance could be instituted by invoking previously dormant constitutional powers and employing political mechanisms to reverse the pattern of devolution of power to the states and the emergence of a variety of strata within the party, each of which operated with a considerable degree of independence.

Apparatus

The centralization of power in the party and government was a critical part of the new pattern of dominance. In order to attain

[4] For a discussion of the distribution of power in the Congress, see Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India*, op. cit., pp. 111–316. For an excellent study of the Indian Constitution, see Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

control over the party, Mrs Gandhi had to ensure control over the appointment of members of the Working Committee, the Parliamentary Board, and the Central Election Committee (CEC). Collectively, these functionally distinct central organs of the party, composed of interlocking and overlapping personnel, comprised the Congress high command. By energizing the power of these central party organs, Mrs Gandhi would be able to intervene directly in the affairs of the state and district party organizations, the operations of state legislative parties, and the selection of the state and national legislative elites.

Having experienced considerable difficulty in her relations with the last two presidents of the undivided Congress, K. Kamaraj and S. Nijalingappa, Mrs Gandhi, for a time, thought of taking over the position herself, as her father had done in the early 1950s.[5] Instead, she made sure that only her trusted lieutenants would be named to the post, and that no one would remain in the position long enough to build an independent base of power.[6]

Since the split in the Congress in November 1969, the party has had five presidents: C. Subramaniam (November to December 1969), Jagjivan Ram (December 1969 to March 1971), D. Sanjivayya (March 1971 to May 1972), Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma (May 1972 to October 1974), and D. K. Barooah (October 1974 to 1976). The extremely high turnover at the top of the Congress organization was only partly accidental. C. Subramaniam served as an interim president for only two months, pending the official selection of a president of the Bombay Session of the Congress in December 1969. Although Mrs Gandhi wanted to select former Congress president D. Sanjivayya, a young Harijan from Andhra, as leader of the party organization, her move was blocked for personal and factional reasons by the Andhra chief minister, K. Brahmananda Reddy. She therefore turned to Jagjivan Ram, one of her senior cabinet ministers and leader of the Harijan community. However, after her massive victory at the mid-term Lok Sabha poll in 1971, she forced Jagjivan Ram out as Congress president and replaced

[5] Haridwar Rai and Jawahar Lal Pandey, 'Intra-Party Democracy: The Experience of the Indian National Congress', *Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies*, vol. 5, October–December 1971, p. 431.

[6] H. M. Jain, 'Changing Role of the Prime Minister—Is India Moving Towards a Prime Ministerial System?', *Journal of the Society for Study of State Governments*, vol. 6, April–June and July–September 1973, p. 143.

him by Sanjivayya.[7] Unlike Jagjivan Ram, Sanjivayya had no strong political base. He was totally dependent on the prime minister, and his appointment could be used as a mechanism for forcing Brahmananda Reddy to give up his position as chief minister of Andhra.[8] Unfortunately for Mrs Gandhi, Sanjivayya died in May 1972. He was replaced by Dr S. D. Sharma, former general secretary of the Congress, who also lacked an independent political base in the party. Sharma was supplanted in October 1974, as part of a general reshuffle of the central cabinet, by D. K. Barooah, one of Mrs Gandhi's ministers, in a move that appeared to be aimed at balancing ideological groups in party and government.[9] Thus, following Mrs Gandhi's election victory of 1971, Congress presidents have been selected because of their personal loyalty to the prime minister and their lack of an independent political base of support, and high turnover—apparently designed to prevent institutional consolidation of power by any potential political challenger—has been part of Mrs Gandhi's style.

Control of the Congress presidency is critical for control of the Working Committee, Parliamentary Board, and the Central Election Committee. The Working Committee is composed of the Congress president and twenty members. Ten are elected by the All-India Congress Committee (AICC), and ten are appointed by the Congress president. Because elections to the Working Committee are very carefully managed by the party leadership through the use of official lists, dissident groups have had considerable difficulty getting representation.[10] Members of the committee continue to be drawn from the central cabinet, state chief ministers, and members of Parliament (MPs). This gives the ministerial wing of the party a pre-eminent position, and the committee has taken on the same character as the Working Committee of the undivided Congress. Ministerial dominance had ensured party–government coordination and prevented the kind of factional challenge to the government by the party organization that in 1969 precipitated the split in Congress.

[7] See *The Times of India*, Bombay, 18 September 1971.

[8] *Link*, Delhi, 1 May 1971, pp. 901–2; *Times of India*, Bombay, 19 March 1971.

[9] *Overseas Hindustan Times*, October 1974.

[10] See *The Economic Times*, 24 and 29 November and 28, 30, and 31 December 1969, for election of Working Committee members.

The Parliamentary Board is composed of eight members selected by the Congress president upon authorization of the Working Committee. Board members are usually appointed from among the members of the Working Committee and constitute an inner circle of it. The board plays a critical role in supervising the activities of Congress legislative parties in the states. It also forms the core of the fifteen-member Central Election Committee, which is composed of the members of the Parliamentary Board and seven members elected prior to each general election by the AICC. The CEC has the final authority to select Congress candidates for national and state legislatures. The Parliamentary Board, however, performs this function between general elections. Thus, while the Parliamentary Board selected the candidates for the 1971 mid-term Lok Sabha election, the CEC selected candidates for the 1972 state legislative elections.

Since the constitution of the Congress party gives the Working Committee, Parliamentary Board, and CEC extraordinary formal powers in conducting party affairs, control over these central organs of the party gives the Congress leadership a potentially dominant voice in party organizational affairs and the recruitment of central and state legislative party elites. Unlike her predecessors, Mrs Gandhi has attempted to use these centralizing powers to intervene directly in the affairs of the state parties. She has tried to break the hold of party bosses and to prevent the emergence of independent power centres in the states.

The Working Committee has inherited from the pre-independence period extraordinary powers as chief executive of the party organization. The committee has the power to superintend, direct, and control all subordinate Congress committees; to invoke sanctions for breaches of party discipline; and to take all action in the interest of the Congress that it deems fit.[11] In the past, these powers were used with considerable restraint, but following the split in Congress, the Working Committee used its powers in a highly interventionist way to dissolve the existing Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs) in several states, nominate PCC presidents, and appoint ad hoc committees composed of personnel selected directly by Mrs Gandhi.[12] These appointed PCCs, in

[11] Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India*, op. cit., p. 211.

[12] Iqbal Narain and Mohan Lal Sharma, 'The Fifth State Assembly Elections of India', *Asian Survey*, 13 March 1973, p. 324; *The Times of India*, Bombay, 10 September 1971.

turn, nominated ad hoc District Congress Committees (DCCs). In addition, despite resistance from the states, the central party leadership has bypassed the state party organization and has established direct contact with the party cadre at the district level. Congress presidents since 1971 have convened periodic meetings of presidents and secretaries of the DCCs to discuss organizational issues and party programme and to chalk out a specific work schedule for the DCCs and lower-level committees.[13] Finally, the central leadership has attempted to penetrate lower-level committees by giving the Congress president the power to nominate two representatives to each Congress committee.[14] Despite these efforts at creating a highly centralized party, however, the leadership has found it extremely difficult to run a complex organization like the Congress from New Delhi.[15]

Centralizing a Federal Party

Since the Congress split, the Parliamentary Board has also become increasingly interventionist as part of Mrs Gandhi's overall effort to reshape the party and restore central control. From June 1970 to September 1971, for example, the board met thirty-two times.[16] Although most of these meetings involved the selection of candidates for the mid-term Lok Sabha poll, the Parliamentary Board has intervened in other areas as well. Under Mrs Gandhi's supervision, the board has nominated chief ministers in Congress-dominated states, determined the composition of state cabinets, and forced the resignation of recalcitrant chief ministers, in addition to performing its traditional role of mediating and arbitrating disputes between factions within the state Congress legislative parties.[17] Where the board has found itself unable to maintain stability in a state, Mrs Gandhi, upon the advice of the governor of the state and acting through the president of the republic, has simply suspended or dissolved the state legislature and declared president's

[13] *Link*, 9 May 1971, pp. 8–9; *The Times of India*, 18 September 1971.
[14] *Link*, 15 August 1971, p. 51.
[15] See *The Times of India* editorial, 29 October 1971.
[16] All India Congress Committee, *Report of the General Secretaries June 1970–September 1971* (New Delhi: AICC, 1971), p. 1.
[17] Ramashray Roy, 'India 1972: Fissure in the Fortress', *Asian Survey*, vol. 13, February 1973, pp. 235–6.

rule under Article 356 of the constitution. President's rule was ended whenever Mrs Gandhi felt the state Congress was again in a position to form a stable government. The most far-reaching example of the intervention of the Parliamentary Board in state Congress affairs came in January 1974 in the state of Gujarat. Following a series of riots and student agitations against an allegedly corrupt and inept Congress government in Gujarat, the central government imposed president's rule. The legislature was not dissolved as demanded by the demonstrators; it was simply suspended pending a return to normalcy. Chimanbhai Patel, the leader of the Congress legislative party in Gujarat, refused to step down as leader and instead resigned from the Assembly. He intended to facilitate dissolution of the legislature and force new elections as demanded by the demonstrators. Since this was against the directives of the Congress high command, Patel was suspended from the party for six years.[18] Such vigorous interventions by the central government and party were rare in post-independence India.

A similar shift in roles has occurred in the activities of the Central Election Committee of the Congress. Over the years since independence, the CEC's authority in selecting Congress candidates for state and national legislatures had slowly eroded.[19] State leaders, through their control over Pradesh Election Committees (PECs), came to dominate the selection process for their state, and the CEC played a role only in those states that were badly factionalized or unable to reach a negotiated settlement. Since the Congress split, the decentralization of the selection process has been reversed. The reversal of the process was especially evident in 1972 when Mrs Gandhi removed strongly entrenched chief ministers in Rajasthan, Andhra, Assam, and Madhya Pradesh prior to the election, forced the resignation of a number of elected PCCs, and replaced several PECs by ad hoc committees nominated by the central party leadership.[20] Then, using the criteria established

[18] A. M. Zaidi (ed.), *Annual Register of Indian Political Parties 1973–74* (New Delhi: Orientalia, 1975); All India Congress Committee, *Report of the General Secretaries September 1973—June 1974* (New Delhi: AICC, 1974), p. 16.

[19] Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India*, op. cit., pp. 288–98, 438–9.

[20] Marcus F. Franda, 'India's 1972 State Elections', *American Universities Fieldstaff Reports*, South Asia Series, vol. 16, no. 1, April 1972; Norman D. Palmer, *Elections and Political Development: The South Asian Experience* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1975), pp. 115–25.

by the CEC of retiring one-third of the sitting members, allotting 15 per cent of the seats to women, and ensuring representation for minorities, intellectuals, youth, labour, and 'weaker sections of society',[21] the CEC, under Mrs Gandhi's direction, attempted to restructure state legislative elites from above. Although Mrs Gandhi was able to distribute tickets in such a way as to give her nominees for state leadership a majority, she had to be sure to compromise sufficiently with dominant groups in the states to prevent disgruntled Congressmen from sabotaging the official candidates at the polls. The influence of formerly entrenched groups was thus 'curbed and contained', but not eliminated.[22] This method of CEC intervention was deeply resented by local Congressmen in the states.[23]

The formal centralized constitutional powers of the central party organization, which had become increasingly dormant in the years since independence, were thus revived by Mrs Gandhi. She put them to work to restore central control over the mass organization, the legislative parties in the states, and national and state legislative elites.

Subordinating the President

A similar effort at centralization of power took place at the government level. Mrs Gandhi took a variety of political steps to consolidate her power and prevent the emergence of independent power blocks or institutional threats to her authority. These actions focused especially on the president of the republic, the cabinet, and the Congress party in Parliament.

Mrs Gandhi's opponents in the undivided Congress had tried to create an activist president of the republic whom they could control as a device to challenge the prime minister. The lesson was not lost on Mrs Gandhi. The immediate cause of the split in the Congress was, in the final analysis, a direct result of a factional

[21] All India Congress Committee, *Report of the General Secretaries, October 1971—May 1972* (New Delhi: AICC, 1972), p. 9.

[22] Narain and Sharma, 'The Fifth State Assembly Elections', op. cit., pp. 323–6.

[23] *The Times of India*, editorial, 2 December 1972; V. S. K. Haranath, 'Undemocratic Trends in the Congress Party of India: A View Point', *Indian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 2, May–August 1973, pp. 142–56.

dispute over the election of the president of the republic. The Congress Parliamentary Board, dominated by the 'Syndicate' (an informal coalition of state bosses), voted to nominate Sanjiva Reddy as the Congress candidate over the objections of Mrs Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi, convinced that this move was designed to challenge her position as prime minister, supported the non-Congress nominee, V. V. Giri. As a result of Mrs Gandhi's support, Giri succeeded in defeating Reddy by a narrow margin. The Syndicate, which also controlled eleven of the twenty-one seats in the Working Committee, decided to take disciplinary action against Mrs Gandhi, and thereby precipitated the split in the Congress.[24]

V. V. Giri's term as president expired in 1974. Despite his desire to remain for a second term, Mrs Gandhi decided to nominate Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed for the post. Ahmed, a seventy-year-old Muslim from the small state of Assam and a loyal colleague, was certainly in no position to challenge Mrs Gandhi.[25] The strategy of selecting someone like Ahmed as president proved to be especially critical in June 1975, when the prime minister advised the president to declare a National Emergency under Article 352 of the constitution. Ahmed could be counted upon to act only on the advice of the prime minister, even under the extraordinary circumstances which had given rise to the Emergency. Had the president balked, Mrs Gandhi's position would have been seriously undermined and a severe crisis would have developed.

A Dependent Cabinet

As prime minister, Indira Gandhi has also attempted to ensure complete and full control over her cabinet. Unlike Nehru, she has tended to recruit a large number of young intellectuals with little or no political base in the party.[26] Moreover, in order to keep ministers off-balance and prevent the consolidation of power of some of her senior colleagues like Y. B. Chavan and Jagjivan Ram, she has resorted to the technique of frequent minor reshuffling of ministers and portfolios with a promise that a major change would

[24] See R. P. Rao, *The Congress Splits* (Bombay: Lalvani Publishing House, 1971), pp. 91–162.

[25] *Overseas Hindustan Times*, 29 August 1974, p. 1.

[26] Satish K. Arora, 'Social Background of the Indian Cabinet', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 7, Special Number, 1972, pp. 1523–32.

take place in the near future. She has also retained a variety of key portfolios under her direct control, centralized key governmental functions such as security and intelligence directly under the prime minister, and following Shastri's example, has greatly expanded the role of the prime minister's secretariat. These techniques have strengthened the position of the prime minister and have kept any potential challenger completely off-balance.[27] Finally, while still making use of the Political Affairs Committee of the cabinet to ratify major decisions,[28] Mrs Gandhi has also been known for her frequent consultation with her own unofficial kitchen cabinet.[29] Yet, even here, the individuals so designated have tended to change over time and lose favour. Thus, Dinesh Singh, a prominent member of the kitchen cabinet in 1969, has ceased even to be a minister.[30] The current favourites seem to be D. K. Barooah, president of the Congress; Sidhartha Shankar Ray, chief minister of West Bengal; Bansi Lal, former chief minister of Haryana; Sanjay Gandhi, her son; and Rajni Patel, Bombay PCC president.[31] This entire process has tended to emphasize personal power at the cost of institutionalized power.

Countercurrents in the Parliamentary Party

One of Mrs Gandhi's strongest assets has been her ability to retain the loyalty of the majority of the members of the Congress Party in Parliament (CPP). The vast majority of the CPP members supported her in her battle with the Syndicate and have rallied to her support during every major crisis. Despite her limited influence in selecting candidates for the 1971 Lok Sabha mid-term poll, the election victories of 1971 and 1972 and the promise of ministerial positions in the government have made members of the CPP dependent on the patronage of the prime minister, rather than of

[27] Krishan Bhatia, *Indira* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), pp. 204–5; S. C. Gangal, *Prime Minister and the Cabinet in India* (New Delhi: Navachetna, 1972).

[28] H. M. Jain, 'Decision-making at the Centre: Role of the Prime Minister of India', *Journal of the Society for Study of State Governments*, vol. 7, January–March 1974, pp. 1–12.

[29] H. M. Jain, 'Changing Role of the Prime Minister', p. 123.

[30] *The Times of India*, 14 April 1971.

[31] *The Hindu*, Madras, 26 June 1975.

the chief minister of a member's home state. Congress members of Parliament (MPs) have come to look to Mrs Gandhi for promotion, patronage, and electoral support.

The newer members of the CPP, as shown by a *Times of India* study of Congressmen entering the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1971, are younger, better educated, and reflect a significant increase in intellectuals as opposed to landowners. (The higher levels of education reflect the increasing spread of education to the rural areas and represent a new bridge between urban and rural India.[32]) They have tended to be somewhat more ideologically oriented than their predecessors.

Although the vast majority of Congress MPs have traditionally been more or less non-ideological in their orientation and have focused upon their primary role as expediters in pressing for benefits for their constituents, there emerged within the CPP in the late 1950s several formal and informal ideological pressure groups. The most organized and vocal was called the Socialist Forum. It rejected factional intrigue and insisted that its primary role was to educate, propagandize, and press for the implementation of the declared socialist goals of the party. The Socialist Forum was reorganized after the 1962 general election and renamed the Congress Forum for Socialist Action (CFSA). The position of the CFSA was especially strengthened after the 1967 general election with the entry into the CPP of several former members of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). The group became increasingly vocal, demanding the implementation of the ten-point programme adopted by the Congress after its 1967 election debacle as a mechanism for refurbishing the party's image. The programme included abolition of privy purses, social control of banks, and nationalization of general insurance. Mrs Gandhi encouraged the members of the CFSA to attack the more conservative leaders of the Syndicate in her battle for control of the Congress. After the split in the Congress in 1969, CFSA members succeeded in getting elected to the Executive Committee of the CPP and attempted to use the CPP executive as a mechanism to build up the tempo of pressure for the implementation of a radical policy by the central and state

[32] Palmer, *Elections and Political Development*, op. cit., pp. 43–4; *The Times of India*, 31 March 1971; *The Hindu*, 28 May 1972.

leadership. In fact from 1969 until 1972, the CFSA members, who had little real support in the party organization, were able to use the CPP Executive Committee as a kind of super Working Committee to influence the party leadership.[33]

By 1972, however, the influence of the CFSA began to decline. There were three main reasons. In the first place, Mrs Gandhi, having consolidated her power in the party and government, became increasingly annoyed with the constant criticism being levelled by the ultra-left of the CFSA against the leadership. The group, therefore, found it increasingly difficult to press for action in her name. Second, the CFSA split into two groups. One group, composed of former PSP members like Chandra Shekhar, Mohan Dharia, Krishan Kant, and Ram Dhan, was called the 'Young Turks'. They tended to be more moderate, strongly anti-Communist, but committed to implementation of the socialist policies outlined in various Congress resolutions. The second group, on the other hand, was small, but highly vocal, and consisted of former members of the pro-Soviet CPI. They demanded a more radical economic policy and rebuilding of the Congress around an organizing cadre. They had strong supporters among ministers (K. R. Ganesh, K. D. Malaviya, and the late Mohan Kumaramangalam), the members of the Working Committee (Chandrajit Yadav, Vayalar Ravi, and possibly Congress president D. K. Barooah), and the chief ministers of a few states (Nandini Satpathy of Orissa and Zail Singh of Punjab).[34] The pro-CPI lobby in the CPP came largely from the Hindi-speaking states of northern India—Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Haryana.[35] As early as the summer of 1973, one of their members, Shashi Bhushan, had called for the creation of a limited dictatorship in India.[36]

Although Mrs Gandhi's majority was dependent upon CPI support from 1969 to 1971, this dependence ceased with the restoration of Congress dominance. In the states, however, the Congress continued to be dependent upon CPI support in West Bengal, Orissa, and Kerala, and individual Congress leaders used CPI support in intra-factional battles in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Many

[33] See *Link*, 20 May 1973, pp. 27–8; ibid., 22 April 1973, pp. 10–11; and *The Times of India*, 17 and 21 April 1973.

[34] *Overseas Hindustan Times*, 13 February 1975, pp. 1, 7.

[35] Ibid.

[36] *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 13 July 1975.

pro-CPI Congressmen even went so far as to argue that India's special relationship with the Soviet Union required close cooperation and even a sharing of power between the Congress and the CPI.

A third reason for the decline of the CFSA was the creation of the Nehru Forum. In an effort to offset the growing influence of the CFSA, a group of Congressmen led by Uma Shankar Dikshit, a close colleague and friend of Mrs Gandhi, created the Nehru Forum in August 1972. The forum worked to counter the pro-CPI lobby in its alleged attempts to undermine Mrs Gandhi's confidence in such key ministers as Dikshit, Jagjivan Ram, Y. B. Chavan, Kamlapati Tripathi, C. Subramaniam, and T. A. Pai, all of whom were dubbed rightist. This anti-CPI group felt that the strength of the Congress in the rural areas was more than enough to offset the urban base of support of the pro-CPI group. Although both the CFSA and the Nehru Forum were officially requested to disband by Mrs Gandhi in 1973, the two groups, plus the 'Young Turks', continued to function as informal, ideological pressure groups with the CPP.[37]

Thus, after six years of conflict over control of the party and government, Mrs Gandhi was not content to dominate the Congress solely through her charisma. The conflict of 1966 to 1972 had taught her a bitter lesson that led her to consolidate her power so that no potential challenger could emerge. Mrs Gandhi's consolidation of power resulted in the creation of a pyramidal decision-making structure in the party and government in which all key institutional positions were staffed by loyal and trusted followers. Although the decision-making structure prevented threats to her personal power, it tended to centralize decision making, weaken institutionalization, and create an overly personalized regime. Moreover, the new political process proved unable to manage the tensions and cleavages of a heterogeneous party operating in a heterogeneous society, federally governed. A major crisis in the system followed.

Vulnerabilities of the New Congress Dominance

Since Mrs Gandhi's new politics were superimposed upon the old, the Congress remained vulnerable to the twin threats of

[37] See *The Times of India*, 9 February 1974 and *The Statesman Weekly*, 5 April 1975, p. 5.

factionalism from within and opposition alliance politics from without. These inherent vulnerabilities threatened the stability of continued Congress dominance.[38] Internal tensions in particular were aggravated by the prime minister's apparent manipulative style, her use of populist ideology for political mobilization, and her emphasis on economic performance. These factors combined to make the management of one-party dominance extremely difficult and complex.

Several factors tended to make Mrs Gandhi's new Congress look very much like the old. In the first place, an incongruity persisted between the desire for cohesion and the need to restore Congress dominance in a highly segmented society. Second, the dilemmas generated by the unwieldy character of a historically open, mass party remained unsolved. Finally, tension persisted as a result of the structural incompatability of trying to operate a centralized party in a federal system, resulting in severe problems of conflict management.

Centrifugal Pulls

The need to restore Congress dominance was clearly a precondition of the creation of a new political process. Yet, the restoration of dominance could not be achieved solely by Mrs Gandhi's charisma. It involved considerable compromise with the segmented character of Indian society. The limitations of restructuring the Congress from above were clearly visible during the process of candidate selection in 1971 and 1972. Despite greater control and direction of the process of candidate selection, the overwhelming need to select candidates who were not just acceptable to Mrs Gandhi, but who could also win at the polls meant that even Mrs Gandhi could not bypass local caste, regional, communal, and factional alignments. Although Mrs Gandhi clearly attempted to manipulate state and local situations to her advantage, the Congress continued to remain a broadly aggregative electoral coalition, rather than a cohesive ideologically coherent party.

Mrs Gandhi's opportunities to restructure the party varied over time and from state to state. In the 1971 mid-term Lok Sabha poll, her freedom of action was still limited. Despite an attempt to give a new look to the party, Mrs Gandhi was able to

[38] Palmer, *Elections and Political Development*, op. cit., pp. 143–7.

have a decisive voice in the selection of candidates in only four states—Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Jammu and Kashmir—where the Congress was badly divided and thus susceptible to central management. In states like Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Assam, and Bihar, on the other hand, state leaders continued to dominate the selection process and there was little change in the composition of the party. In a variety of instances, moreover, the Congress was compelled to grant tickets to defectors in an effort to bolster its local electoral support and ensure victory.[39]

Similarly, despite her stronger position within the Congress as a result of the 1971 mid-term poll victory and the popularity of her role in the Bangladesh civil war, Mrs Gandhi's ability to restructure the party at the time of the 1972 state elections was also limited. Again, Mrs Gandhi had to succumb to a variety of local pressures of caste, community, region, and party factional alignments, and her success in restructuring the party varied from state to state.[40]

The most dramatic changes were evident in Andhra Pradesh and Mysore as the power of older landed castes was diminished in favour of newly mobilized groups belonging to the less privileged sectors of society. However, even in successful cases such as Andhra Pradesh, the attempt to rebuild the party on a non-dominant caste basis did not go unchallenged. The formerly factionalized, but dominant, Reddy caste immediately unified in an effort to reverse the onslaught, and there was a sizeable revolt as 200 Congressmen rebelled and contested as independents. Although the central leadership responded with massive expulsions, those suspended were

[39] See *The Times of India*, 6 February 1971; Iqbal Narain and Mohan Lal Sharma, 'Election Politics, Secularization and Political Development: The 5th Lok Sabha Elections in Rajasthan', *Asian Survey*, vol. 12, April 1972, pp. 294–309; Padma Srivastava, 'Selection of Congress Party (R) Candidates for Parliamentary Seats in Delhi (1971)', *The Indian Political Science Review*, vol. 4, October 1971–March 1972, pp. 29–38.

[40] See Marcus F. Franda, 'India's 1972 State Elections', pp. 10–11; Narain and Sharma, 'The Fifth State Assembly Elections' op. cit., Partap Singh, 'Haryana State Assembly Polls of 1968 and 1972', *Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 7, April–September 1973, pp. 143–64; and G. Ram Reddy, 'The 1972 Assembly Elections in Andhra Pradesh', *Indian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 1, June–August 1972, pp. 87–93.

later quietly reinstated. As one observer noted, 'Half-way through, the expulsions reached such propositions that they became untenable and the campaign was stopped. Possibly the central leadership realized that it is still impossible to lead the party through direct contact with the base, that the relays of factional leaders who act as middlemen between the leaderships at the state and central level and the grassroots cannot yet be ignored.[41]

In most other states, no such massive transformation was attempted and in no state were previously dominant factions totally eliminated. In Rajasthan, Haryana, and Jammu and Kashmir new leaders were imposed on the party, but the socio-economic base of support remained unchanged. In Assam, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh there was a drastic turnover of candidates and an infusion of new and younger faces, but those recruited continued to be drawn from the same socio-economic base as in the past. In states such as Gujarat, Punjab, Bihar, and West Bengal, on the other hand, the strong desire to restore Congress dominance required winning back old supporters who had defected from the Congress in the past.[42] Thus, Congress dominance at the Centre and in the states was restored by selecting candidates who could win. This, in turn, tended to make the new Congress look very much like the old. Since Congress dominance remains tenuous in the face of factional revolt or opposition alliance, attempts to restructure the Congress from above had to be tempered by the need to maintain a strong electoral base below.

Non-hierarchical Party

The compromises made to restore Congress dominance were reinforced by the open, mass character of the Congress organization. The pyramidal structure of Mrs Gandhi's Congress rests, by tradition, on a wide-open base. The base consists of two types of members: primary and active. Primary members are recruited biennially and pay one rupee (presently, eleven cents) dues. Any person who has been a primary member for two years may become an active member upon paying a subscription fee of twenty-five

[41] Dagmar Bernstorff, 'Eclipse of "Reddy Raj"'? The Attempted Restructuring of Congress Party Leadership in Andhra Pradesh', *Asian Survey*, vol. 8, October 1973, pp. 973–4.

[42] Franda, 'India's 1972 State Elections', op. cit., p. 11.

rupees, or on enrolling twenty-five primary members biennially. An active member must also subscribe to the traditional Congress values of *khadi* (home-spun cloth), prohibition, communal unity, and Harijan upliftment.[43] In practice, membership tends to be enrolled on a competitive basis by Congress factions attempting to control the party organization to maintain power, or as a springboard for gaining control of the state government. This practice has not changed.

Following the Congress split in 1969, the central leadership repeatedly extended enrolment deadlines for membership and postponed organizational elections due to the 'large number of Congressmen returning to the fold'.[44] By the time the Working Committee set a final deadline of 15 August 1972, Congress dominance had been restored and there was a mad rush to join the party. Congress membership rolls reached a near record of 10 million primary members and 300,000 active members.[45] During the last membership drive of the undivided Congress in 1966–7, the Congress had enrolled 11 million primary and 208,000 active members.[46] Although a good portion of this membership was bogus and based on the payments of membership fees of fictitious members, the membership rolls are used as the basis for party organizational elections. Primary members act as an electoral college at the lowest level of a basic unit, but only active members are eligible for election as a member of any Congress committee. Control of the party organization, however, is essential because of the party's role in candidate selection.

Several factors contributed to the massive influx of members, both real and fictitious. In the first place, a wave of popular enthusiasm in support of Mrs Gandhi and the Congress following the 'Indira wave' of 1971–2 brought a large number of new recruits to the party. They were attracted by the central leadership's call to youth, intellectuals, minorities, and the underprivileged who had worked for Mrs Gandhi during the elections to join the

[43] 'Text of Congress Constitution of 1969', in Zaidi, *The Great Upheaval*, op. cit., pp. 581–2.

[44] All India Congress Committee, *Report of the General Secretaries, 1970–1971*, p. 30.

[45] A. M. Zaidi, *Annual Register of Indian Political Parties, 1972–7* (New Delhi: Orientalia, 1973), p. 38; *Times of India*, 23 and 30 December 1972.

[46] Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India*, op. cit., p. 345.

party on a permanent basis.[47] Second, there was an influx of ex-Congressmen and even opposition party members into the newly restored dominant party, which again controlled the major sources of patronage and benefits. Third, the entry of both new and old recruits was facilitated by the competitive enrolment of Congress factions attempting to gain control of the party organization. Chief ministers selected by Mrs Gandhi and without a local base of support tried to strengthen their power base in the organization. Dissident factions, especially those groups that had seen their positions in the party undercut at the time of candidate selection and ministry making in 1971 and 1972, sought to strengthen their positions within the party organization as a base from which to attack those in control of the state government and to place themselves in a strategic position for the next general elections.[48]

The frenzied pace of mobilization affected the Congress organization in a variety of ways. In the first place, it restored the pre-1969 character of the Congress. Veteran Congressmen, using the time-tested technique of bogus enrolment and cheque-book party building, involving the payment of all required fees for non-existent members, were able to re-establish their control of the Congress organization. As a result, newly mobilized sectors such as youth, intellectuals, Scheduled Castes, and backward classes lost out to formerly dominant groups.[49] Congress youth wings, for example, were unable to survive as an effective force, except in states like Kerala and West Bengal, where they were effectively organized. Second, the ability of formerly dominant groups to re-assert their positions within the Congress organization resulted in the outbreak of rampant factionalism in almost every state. Party dissidents, their positions strengthened within the party organization, joined with their supporters in the state legislative assemblies to launch a major attack against state leaders nominated by Mrs Gandhi. Chief ministers, finding their positions in the organization undercut, were forced to turn to the central leadership for support, only to find that this was not sufficient to keep them in power. Third, Mrs Gandhi's nominees, challenged by dissident groups in state after state, were unable to survive the factional onslaught. Chief ministers in Andhra, Bihar, and Gujarat were

[47] *Link*, 25 April 1971, pp. 15–16.
[48] Ibid., 2 September 1972, pp. 15, 17.
[49] *The Times of India*, 23 and 30 December 1972.

forced to resign.[50] Mrs Gandhi's call for a restoration of Congress hegemony to ensure strong, stable, and effective government in India appeared hollow when even Mrs Gandhi proved unable to sustain her nominees in office.

Collapsing State Power Bases

The segmented nature of Indian society and the open character of the Congress exacerbated the structural incompatibility of a centralized party in a federal system, creating severe problems of conflict management. One of the most important functions traditionally performed by the Congress high command was the management of conflict within the party. During the Nehru era, the high command acted as an appellate structure to arbitrate and mediate state-level conflicts, ensure fair procedures, and confirm newly emerged state leaders in office. It could not impose leaders on a reluctant party, nor could it sustain leaders in power who had lost the confidence of the majority of the state legislative party. During the period from 1963 to 1969, the passing of the old nationalist leadership eroded the effective power of the high command, and power in the Congress became more decentralized. The district and state levels of the party operated with a considerable degree of independence, and there was a general dilution of power throughout the party structure. Although each level in the structure looked to the next level for patronage and dispute settlement, the system began to break down because factionalism had begun to penetrate every level, including the high command itself. Thus, the high command became increasingly unable to act as a point of appeal for dissident groups, with the result that many felt compelled to leave the party and function as opposition parties. The emergence of Congress splinter parties in almost every state at the time of the 1967 general elections was a telling example of this organizational breakdown.[51]

Mrs Gandhi re-established centralized control of the Congress, but in a totally new way, which ultimately proved unworkable. In an effort to restructure the party and reduce the power of state leaders, she eased out of office the very state leaders who had supported her during her struggle for control of the Congress

[50] *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 24 June 1973.

[51] Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India*, op. cit., pp. 437–41.

against the Syndicate. The first to go was Mohanlal Sukhadia, chief minister of Rajasthan for over a decade. He was followed by K. Brahmananda Reddy of Andhra Pradesh, Mohinder Mohan Chaudhury of Assam, S. C. Shukla of Madhya Pradesh, and even V. P. Naik of Maharashtra. The departure of such dominant state leaders, coupled with the split in the Congress and the defeat of the Syndicate, gave Mrs Gandhi an almost free hand to restructure the state party leadership of the Congress. She used the technique of nominating candidates for the chief ministership for each state, who were then ratified in office by the dominant state Congress legislative party. Most of Mrs Gandhi's nominees were former members of her council of ministers, were personally loyal to her, and had no established local bases of power in their home states.[52] Although state Congress legislative parties dutifully endorsed their new leaders unanimously, they deeply resented the imposition of outsiders from above.

Following the organizational elections in the fall of 1972, dissident factions began to mobilize from below to challenge the leadership of Mrs Gandhi's nominees. The credibility and authority of most nominated chief ministers was so weak that they constantly had to turn to New Delhi for political support to stay in office. Moreover, although Mrs Gandhi remained free of factional alignment and played the role of final arbitrator and mediator in state factional disputes, central cabinet ministers, members of the Working Committee, and even members of the CPP became closely allied with one faction or another in their home states. To many it appeared that the new Congress pyramid of command, instead of facilitating the emergence of a new, stable, and effective state leadership with a strong local base of support, was deliberately manipulating Congress factionalism to prevent a healthy consolidation of power in the states.[53] The result was weak, ineffective, and inept leadership incapable of dealing with the mounting economic hardship of the population.

By the middle of 1973, Mrs Gandhi was unable to sustain this pattern any longer, as one nominated chief minister after another was voted out of office by the state party or was being

[52] J. C. Johari, *Reflections on Indian Politics* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1974), pp. 243–311.

[53] See Romesh Thapar, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 10, 19 April 1975, pp. 648–9; and ibid., 10 May 1975, pp. 744–5.

severely challenged by dissident Congressmen. Surveying the increasing instability and disorder in her party, Mrs Gandhi tried to disassociate herself from her nominees by arguing that she had selected these leaders upon the recommendations of others. More significantly, Mrs Gandhi changed her style of management. Rajasthan and Gujarat were given a free hand to select their own leader, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh was forced out following a revolt of the state police, and Andhra Pradesh and Bihar were encouraged to nominate their own compromise candidates, who only then received the endorsement of Mrs Gandhi. Thus, the centralized unity of command adopted by Mrs Gandhi began slowly to give way to a devolution of power to lower-level party structures. Mrs Gandhi's interventionist role in managing state legislative party affairs began to decline and it appeared that she might permit some consolidation of power in the states and play a more traditional role of coordinating and trouble shooting, rather than controlling and managing.[54]

In many ways, however, the damage was already done. People began to question the utility of the Congress style of 'governmental stability'. More significantly, inept chief ministers had to spend all their time trying to stay in power and were unable to cope with the problems generated by thirty months of economic crisis, food shortages, and uncontrolled inflation. Agitations that originated as localized expressions of grievance against incompetent state leaders blossomed into large movements, which ultimately came to challenge the political power of the Congress at the Centre.

In a heterogeneous, segmented society like India, there exists a political and functional interdependence that cannot be sustained by the kind of centralized control Mrs Gandhi has attempted to employ. Nehru learned the lessons of overcentralization and the limits of central manipulation in the early 1950s in dealing with the problems of the state of Andhra Pradesh. A central leadership may facilitate the emergence of a new leadership; it cannot invent that leadership where it does not exist.[55] Because of the complexities of social, religious, subregional, and ethnic differences, the Indian political system faces severe problems of political cohesion

[54] Ramashray Roy, 'India: 1973: A Year of Discontent', *Asian Survey*, vol. 14, February 1975, pp. 85–94.

[55] See Kochanek, *The Congress Party in India*, op. cit., pp. 223–4, 304–5.

and stability reflected in its style of factional and alliance politics. Some degree of layering within the party is essential to its stability and survival. Even though state leaders may become powerful through a healthy consolidation of power, they will still remain factionally vulnerable and, thus, will still depend upon the vital brokerage function which only a strong, unified, central leadership can provide. Even strong state leaders will still be dependent upon the Centre. The refusal to permit the development of the state leadership based on support from below threatens the party with stagnation.

The Centre itself, in turn, is more dependent upon the states than it is prepared to admit. The states play a critical role in the development and maintenance of political support and in implementing those policies that have the widest impact on the population at large in the fields of agriculture, education, and welfare. Mrs Gandhi's new political process, while definitely preventing any challenge to her personal power, contributed to a major political crisis and undermined her claim that Congress dominance was essential to continued political stability and development. The resultant shift in focus from nation building to regime building has inherent within it the seeds of disintegration.

The Crisis of Congress Dominance

The mounting factional instability of the Congress governments in the states developed in the midst of the severest economic crisis in India since independence. The cumulative impact of the financial consequences of the 1971 Bangladesh war, the sharp drop in food production brought on by two successive droughts, and the sudden international energy and fertilizer crisis that grew out of the Arab–Israeli war of October 1973 touched off a wave of unprecedented inflation, widespread food shortages, isolated outbreaks of famine, recession, and further economic stagnation and unemployment.[56] The hopes generated by Mrs Gandhi's populist rhetoric suddenly collapsed, for both urban and rural sectors of Indian society experienced severe deprivation. Spontaneous outbreaks of violence and protest against ineffective Congress governments occurred first in Gujarat and then in Bihar. Slowly, the inchoate

[56] Ram Joshi, 'India 1974: Growing Political Crisis', *Asian Survey*, vol. 15, February 1975, pp. 85–94.

nature of these regional explosions was galvanized into a significant new political movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan, who threatened to translate these regional protests into a national, anti-Congress alliance. India was suddenly confronted by a simultaneous economic and political crisis which seemed to threaten the survival of the Indian political system.[57]

The Narayan movement had an impact on national politics in three ways: (1) a symbolic appeal to urban intellectuals and students with its emphasis on Gandhian morality and tactics; (2) resuscitation of the fragmented political opposition; and (3) threat of a possible split in the Congress.[58] The opposition uniting behind Janata candidates could, as in 1967, translate the fragmented votes of diverse parties into pluralities in single-member districts. Congress dominance might not survive.

Mrs Gandhi's centralized pyramid of power, once subjected to this stress, ironically contributed to its further development. In the first place, Mrs Gandhi's technique of frequent shifts of cabinet personnel created political and administrative chaos. The central ministers found it very difficult to deal with the economic crisis that confronted the nation. Repeated shifts in policy due to unresolved ideological tensions had disastrous economic consequences. The failure of the government's attempt to take over wholesale trade in wheat aggravated the food shortage, debates over monopoly and the joint sector created confusion among the industrialists, the unemployment problem intensified, and massive deficit financing fanned the flames of inflation.

Second, the tendency to treat the states as potential threats to the Centre resulted in weak and ineffective state governments whose leaders were too busy manoeuvring to stay in power to be capable of coping with the growing hardships experienced by the population. Moreover, since these weak and ineffective state governments tended to be closely identified with the central Congress leadership, local discontent was easily translated into a threat to the national government itself. The crises in Gujarat and Bihar were notable examples.

[57] Rajni Kothari, 'Year of Turmoil', *Seminar*, vol. 185, January 1975, pp. 1035–54.

[58] See *The Times of India*, January 1975; *The Statesman Weekly*, 22 March 1975, p. 10, and 5 April 1975, p. 10; and John Wood, 'Extra-Parliamentary Opposition in India', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 49, Fall 1975, pp. 313–34.

Third, Mrs Gandhi's Congress became increasingly intolerant of dissent and came to rely more and more on coercion in an attempt to control it. Dissent within the Congress, party opposition, and press criticism ceased to function as thermostats measuring discontent. They were now interpreted as anti-party, anti-national, and traitorous, or even foreign inspired. Congressmen who called for a dialogue with Jayaprakash Narayan were expelled from the party. Opposition party attempts to mobilize and express local grievances, valid or not, were perceived as law and order problems. Increasing press criticism was dismissed as the voice of monopoly capital destroying the people's confidence.

Fourth, the system became highly personalized. Yet, curiously, by the fall of 1974, Mrs Gandhi's charisma began to suffer. Until 1972, people in India were likely to separate Indira Gandhi from her party. By 1974, they tended to identify her with her party, while at the same time the image of both declined severely.[59] By the fall of 1974, the prime minister's popularity had fallen to an all-time low.[60] Charges of corruption levelled against state leaders and central cabinet ministers now touched the prime minister herself.

Finally, there emerged a serious factional split within the Congress party in Parliament, based on ideological and tactical differences. The former PSP 'Young Turks' were strongly anti-communist and sympathetic to their older leader, Jayaprakash Narayan. The pro-CPI group in the Congress dubbed the Narayan movement a manifestation of rightist reaction and supported Mrs Gandhi's treatment of the movement as an anti-government plot. A large number of Congress centrists were extremely sympathetic to the Gandhian appeals of Narayan and were especially fearful of the impact his appeal might have at the polls. These fears were, in fact, borne out by the result of the 1975 Gujarat elections. Thus, the Congress response to the Narayan movement had the added potential danger of creating a split in the Congress itself.[61]

[59] Indian Institute of Public Opinion, 'The Images Behind the Uttar Pradesh Elections: 1974', *Monthly Public Opinion Surveys*, vol. 19, February 1974, p. 211.

[60] Indian Institute of Public Opinion, 'The Prime Minister's Popularity: September 1974, The Unprecedented Fall', *Monthly Public Opinion Surveys*, vol. 19; *idem*, 'Indian Popular Expectations for 1974; Increasing Pessimism', *Monthly Public Opinion Surveys*, vol. 19, December 1973, pp. 1–111.

[61] *Overseas Hindustan Times*, 13 February 1975, pp. 1, 7.

It was this growing political crisis that translated the 12 June 1975 Allahabad High Court judgment that Mrs Gandhi had been guilty of corrupt election practices from a legal issue into a threat to Mrs Gandhi's personal power and to the political system itself.[62] Mrs Gandhi responded on 26 June 1975 by declaring a state of National Emergency under Article 352 of the Indian constitution, arresting major opposition leaders, and imposing rigid press censorship throughout India.

The Emergency and After

The declaration of a state of Emergency was, therefore, not simply a sudden turn of events, but the end product of a process which saw the weakening of political support for Mrs Gandhi and the Congress party, the emergence of a revitalized opposition, the development of increased tensions and factionalism within the Congress, and a seeming lack of governmental capacity to govern despite massive Congress majorities. Mrs Gandhi's legal problems simply compounded the difficulties of an existing crisis of economic performance and political legitimacy.

Survival

During her rise to power, Mrs Gandhi had effectively destroyed the major regulating mechanisms within the old Congress system of one-party dominance. However, the pyramid of power she had created from 1966 to 1975 foreclosed revolt within the party against her leadership, and this ensured her survival. Following the Allahabad High Court's decision, the party had little choice but to rally to her support. Senior cabinet ministers, Congress MPs, and chief ministers feared that her departure from office, even for a short period, would result in a debilitating schism within the party that would destroy the party's dominance, not only at the Centre, but in the states as well. The absence of any layering of effectively organized state units based on strong local support from below left the party too weak institutionally to absorb such a shock.

[62] For a detailed summary of the events of June 1975, see Norman D. Palmer, 'The Crisis of Democracy in India', *Orbis*, vol. 19, Summer 1975, pp. 379–401; and Richard Park, 'Political Crisis in India, 1975', *Asian Survey*, vol. 15, November 1975, pp. 996–1013.

Mrs Gandhi's decision not to step down pending her appeal to the Supreme Court was made with the full support of the top party leaders. The party held together because the elite held together, an elite that had been handpicked by the prime minister and owed their political survival to her. As one of her chief supporters noted: 'A difficult situation could arise only if there were any groups within the party, or any other party men who would stake his claim for leadership. This has not happened and she should, therefore, continue. There would be no political stability without her.'[63]

Both Jagjivan Ram and Y. B. Chavan, her only potential challengers, realized that if Mrs Gandhi were to step down, neither could become prime minister without a contest. They, therefore, decided to support her continuation in office rather than inherit a divided party. Although Jagjivan Ram hedged somewhat more than Chavan by emphasizing the need to await a final court decision, he too realized he could not become prime minister without a bitterly divisive fight that could split the party for a second time.

The CPP, fearful of the consequences of a succession struggle on the eve of the 1976 general elections, reiterated its faith in Mrs Gandhi and declared that her continued leadership was indispensable to the nation.[64] Similarly, the chief ministers of Congress-dominated states, recognizing their factional vulnerability, declared that Mrs Gandhi's resignation would result in conditions of 'instability, not only at the national level, but also in various states'.[65] Yet it must have been personally significant that, for the first time since she had reached the pinnacle of her power in March 1972, Indira Gandhi had been compelled to turn to a variety of individuals and institution within the party for support.

The new system built by Mrs Gandhi, having ensured her personal survival, now reinforced itself so thoroughly as to mark a significant redirection of political development in India.

Further Centralization

Since the Emergency, there have been two major cabinet reshuffles, by which such senior leaders as Swaran Singh and

[63] *The Economic Times*, 13 June 1975.
[64] Ibid., 19 June 1975.
[65] In a memorandum to President Ahmed, *The Economic Times*, 21 June 1975.

Uma Shankar Dikshit have been replaced by younger supporters of Mrs Gandhi.[66] Power in the government has become concentrated in the hands of a small political elite around the prime minister, aided by the bureaucracy and the military.[67] The thrust towards centralizing power is apparent in the discussions initiated in December 1975 upon proposed major constitutional changes along Gaullist lines.

Since the Emergency, the party has neither been mobilized nor energized to assist the government in the implementation of its newly proclaimed twenty-point programme. Although all party organizational elections were suspended indefinitely, even before the Emergency, the Congress held its seventy-fifth session on schedule at the end of 1975. This session passed a series of resolutions without opposition which endorsed the continuation of the Emergency, ordered a re-examination of the Indian constitution with a view to amending it, and recommended extending the life of Parliament by one year. Thus, the party has been used as a major mechanism for legitimizing the political actions taken by the government.[68]

At the same time, Mrs Gandhi has taken several steps to restore Congress dominance to all twenty-two states. In Gujarat she has succeeded in getting Hitendra Desai, former chief minister and leader of the old Congress, to rejoin the Congress party along with his followers.[69] This action has helped to strengthen the Congress in the state. In Tamil Nadu, not content with persuading a large number of former supporters of the late Syndicate leader, K. Kamaraj, to rejoin the party, thereby strengthening one of the weakest Congress units in India, she has dissolved the state government which has been controlled by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) since 1967.[70] In this move she has used the power of the central government to eliminate the opposition government in the state.

[66] See *Overseas Hindustan Times*, 11 December 1975, and 1 January 1976.

[67] The new inner circle is composed of Sanjay Gandhi, Bansi Lal, D. K. Barooah, S. S. Ray, and Rajni Patel. Among this group, Sanjay Gandhi is emerging as a key figure and has been given an official position in the party as a member of the executive committee of the Youth Congress.

[68] See *Overseas Hindustan Times*, 8 January 1976.

[69] Ibid., 25 September 1975.

[70] *Washington Post*, 1 February 1976.

Finally, Mrs Gandhi has attempted to consolidate her hold over the Congress party in the Hindi heartland states by declaring president's rule and replacing the Congress leadership in Uttar Pradesh,[71] restoring S. C. Shukla to power in Madhya Pradesh,[72] and bringing Bansi Lal, chief minister of Haryana, into the central cabinet.[73] Thus, Mrs Gandhi continues to manipulate state and local situations to her advantage in an attempt to consolidate her hold over the party.

Vulnerabilities Remain

Although Mrs Gandhi has succeeded in restoring her supremacy in both party and government, there remain fundamental problems which pose a dilemma to continued Congress dominance and the survival of Indian unity and the Indian political system.

Brittle Centre: In the first place, India is entirely too large, diverse, and fragmented to be governed by a clear and rigid hierarchy centred in New Delhi. Decision making must include bargaining and negotiating among a variety of actors, each holding some power on his own. Such a system requires a restoration of some degree of state autonomy and state leaders supported from below, not from New Delhi.

Mrs Gandhi's centralized style of command is already encountering resistance from the periphery. The proposed constitutional reforms are, it appears, running into difficulty because of concern on the part of Congressmen from the south that a changed constitutional structure might upset the Centre-state balance of the past. The decision to dissolve the DMK government in Tamil Nadu may strengthen feelings of Tamil nationalism and is, therefore, fraught with danger. In fact, repressive policies, even if carried out in the name of socio-economic reform, may spark separatist or breakaway movements, not only in the south, but also in such critical areas as Bengal, Kashmir, Punjab, and Gujarat.

Reforming the bottom from the top. A second problem involves the possibility of implementing reforms from above, without a corresponding pressure from below. Neither the Indian bureaucracy nor the Congress party as presently constituted is capable

[71] *Overseas Hindustan Times*, 21 January 1976.
[72] Ibid., 1 January 1976.
[73] Ibid., 11 December 1975.

of implementing basic reforms unless prodded by organized groups capable of pressing claims on the political system. But, of course, such groups must have the freedom to mobilize, organize, and agitate, either within the Congress or from outside.[74] For example, even the communist-controlled government in Kerala had difficulty implementing land reforms, despite the best of intensions. A recent study concluded, 'Even if a political elite, responsive to the demands and expectations of the poor, initiates radical legislation, their implementation will be subverted, unless there is pressure built from below through militant protest movement'.[75] A closed Congress and an opposition operating under the restrictions of the Emergency could hardly mobilize such pressures.

Today, both local Congress organizations and local *panchayats* continue to be controlled by the very agrarian interests that would be disadvantaged by Mrs Gandhi's programme of land reforms, ceilings on land ownership, and an agriculture income tax. For example, a study of the Andhra Pradesh Congress demonstrated that, despite Mrs Gandhi's attempt to restructure the party from above, the base of the party continues to be controlled by the forward castes, who are also the dominant landowners.[76] Reform will require more, not less, political dynamism, more, not less, mobilization at the base—and neither is permitted under the Emergency.

Reform vs. reconciliation. A third problem is reflected in the inability of the Congress to reconcile the tensions between the need for organizational mobilization and the need for reconciliation. The twin problems of poverty and diversity pull in different directions. As Mark Franda has observed, 'To attack poverty and bring about economic development, Indian political parties are tempted to seek the widespread mobilization of India's vast population behind concrete programmes. Yet, because of the great diversity of India, widespread mobilization is frequently possible only through a series of negotiations and compromises that tend

[74] Angela S. Burger, *Opposition in a Dominant-Party System* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 282–4.

[75] T. K. Oommen, 'Agrarian Legislations and Movements as Sources of Change: The Case of Kerala', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 10, 4 October 1975, p. 1571.

[76] Bernstorff, 'Eclipse of "Reddy Raj"', op. cit., p. 959.

to dilute such programmes'.[77] This is precisely Mrs Gandhi's dilemma with the twenty-point programme. It cannot be solved by mere centralization, bureaucratization, or even by the use of coercion.

Deinstitutionalization. Finally, the new Congress system is too personalized. It has failed to establish mechanisms for building support other than through the use of populist slogans. Mrs Gandhi is not institutionalizing her charisma so much as creating a severe long-term problem of succession. The Indian political system, prior to the Emergency, had successfully managed three successions. Mrs Gandhi's Congress was unable to manage even one. Mrs Gandhi could not step down, even temporarily, without fear of the system collapsing.

The opposition parties, the groups behind Jayaprakash Narayan, and perhaps even the courts may have behaved irresponsibly, but to a large extent their actions were in response to the severe economic hardships and a growing intolerance and arrogance on the part of Mrs Gandhi's Congress. Surely, the Congress will not be less arrogant under a one-party dictatorship, and yet it will not be able indefinitely to suppress local or national explosions of discontent. A short Emergency may have positive results, but the restoration of the normal functioning of the political system is essential for long-term unity, stability, and development. This normal functioning will have to apply to the Congress as well. It must include a healthy consolidation of power by state Congress leaders, the restoration of a less interventionist umpire role for the Congress high command, and the development of a new consensus about the aims and objectives of the Congress. The highly personalized style of Mrs Gandhi must give way to a more systematic effort of institutionalization of roles and functions within the Congress and the government.

[77] Asoka Mehta *et al.*, 'Forum: Relationship between the Organizational and Parliamentary Wings of the Congress Party', *The Indian Political Science Review*, vol. 4, April–September 1970, p. 269.

4

The United Colours of Congress: Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998[+]

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INTRODUCTION

The decline of the Congress is in many ways the story of Indian politics in the 1990s. In popular as well as academic accounts the changes in the structure of political competition in this decade are seen as a consequence of the decline of the Congress which is largely seen as an autonomous occurrence. The decline has been so swift and yet so decisive that it is easy to forget how surprising it was. Like most entrenched parties of long standing democracies, the Congress too has lived to read many of its obituaries. Not only did it survive the death of Nehru, it also survived the virtual dismemberment of its organizational structure under his daughter. It survived the loss of power at the Centre and then even the death of Indira Gandhi. Against this background the steady decline in the national vote share of the Congress in all the Lok Sabha elections after the unprecedented victory in 1984 is indeed surprising. The forthcoming mid-term election (1999) may slow down or at best halt this steady decline but is unlikely to result in its reversal.

While the story of the decline of the Congress at the national level and its marginalization in some crucial states is too well known to need recapitulation here, one crucial aspect of the story is rather ill-researched and therefore little understood. This aspect

[+] *Economic and Political Weekly*, vols xxxiv, xxxv, nos 34 & 35, 21–27/28 August—3 September 1999.

concerns the changes in the social profile of the Congress voters that accompany its overall decline. In the past the most notable feature of Congress support has been its evenness, both geographical and social. It appeared to have drawn its support equally from all parts of the spectrum, and this gave Indian politics the appearance of politics without distinctive social cleavages.[1] In popular wisdom the Congress was seen as a party that always drew upon captive 'vote banks', especially among the socially disadvantaged groups, and its decline is seen as a function of the loss of these vote banks. Even those who do not buy the mythology of completely polarized 'vote banks' do think that the decline of the Congress is a function of the erosion in its capacity to retain the political loyalty of the socially disadvantaged communities all over the country. Survey evidence of the elections in the 1990s, however, seems to contradict this understanding. Various accounts of the social basis of Congress support suggest that the party continues to be the 'catch-all' formation it always was. It continues to draw almost equal support across the various social cleavages that have been articulated in the arena of electoral politics.

In this chapter we seek to resolve this tension between political perception and survey evidence. We believe that an analysis of the social composition of the Congress vote in the 1990s is of broader significance than the Indian context. It illustrates the pressures faced by catch-all party when it faces competition from cleavage-based formations. The rise of parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) which do, more or less explicitly, appeal to distinctive social groups, indicates the rise of cleavage politics in India. This is in sharp contrast to Western democracies where the talk is all about the decline of cleavage politics.[2] The decline of the Congress illustrates the failure of a catch-all party to handle cleavage-based pressures. A careful analysis of this failure needs to take into account another autonomous dimension, namely, that of regional differentiation. The last decade, or the 'third electoral system', has seen an increasing

[1] See for example, Sheth, D. L. (1975), 'Social Bases of Party Support', in D. L. Sheth (ed.), *Citizens and Parties: Aspects of Competitive Politics in India* (Bombay: Allied Publishers).

[2] Franklin, M. *et al.* (1992), *Electoral Change: Responses to Evolving Social and Attitudinal Structures in Western Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

geographical fragmentation of the Indian electorate, with major regional parties strengthening their position. The state, rather than the nation, has emerged as the effective arena of political choice.

Our concern in this paper is with the implications of these developments for the basis of Congress support. We argue that the decline of the Congress is linked to both these aspects, the social and the regional. At the all-India level, the Congress still draws its support fairly evenly from across the social spectrum. But our contention is that this is largely a consequence of a variety of contradictory tendencies at the state level which cancel out overall. This point has been made before by Chhibber and Petrocik (see Chapter 2 in this volume) who drew attention to the geographical diversity of Congress politics. They were able to show that the social basis of the Congress vote varies from state to state although they stopped short of providing a systematic account of the nature of this geographical diversity.

We agree with Chhibber and Petrocik that, in order to understand contemporary Indian politics, it is essential to disaggregate and to move down from the all-India level and to look at finer distinctions within the Indian electorate. We go further and argue that a key factor in explaining the geographical diversity in Congress support is the nature of party competition. For example, we shall show that Congress draws on different social groups when it is in competition with the BJP than it does when it is in competition with the Left Front (LF). This suggests that we should divide up the Indian electorate according to the nature of party competition in each state. This has the dual advantage of having a theoretically powerful basis of classification and of having reasonably large groupings where our sample surveys can yield reliable results. The last point is not trivial, for one major problem with Chhibber and Petrocik's analysis is that they were reduced to very small sample sizes in their state-by-state analysis and some of their results could well have been due to sampling error rather than to real differences between the states.

Our strategy in this paper, therefore, is to disaggregate the Indian electorate so as to classify the states according to the nature of party competition. Broadly speaking (and recognizing that there is in practice considerable local complexity), we can distinguish five main groupings, the final one of which we subdivide.

First, we have states such as Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh,

Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarat, where the 1990s have witnessed a direct contest between the Congress and the BJP. Any third contender—such as the Rashtriya Janata Party (RJP) in Gujarat has proved to be a short-lived phenomenon.

Second, there is another, smaller group of states, namely, Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura, where there has typically been two-party competition, but this time involving the Congress against the Left. The entry of the Trinamool Congress in 1998 complicates this picture somewhat in West Bengal, but does not alter the basic Left vs rest nature of the electoral contest.

Third, there are a number of states where, in recent elections, the main contenders have been the Congress and a regional party. For our purposes a regional party is not defined in ideological terms but simply as a party whose electoral support is confined effectively to one or two states. In this grouping we have placed Andhra Pradesh where the main regional party is the Telugu Desam (Naidu) [TDP(N)]; Assam, Asom Gana Parisad (AGP); Goa, United Goan Democratic Party (UGDP) and Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP); Meghalaya, Independent (Ind); Pondicherry, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK); Punjab, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD); and Tamil Nadu, DMK and AIADMK among others. The 1998 election saw the BJP mark its presence in many of these states, but basically as an adjunct to its 'regional' ally.

For some purposes it is useful to distinguish another kind of regional contest where the BJP has emerged as a party with substantial presence in its own right. The BJP has entered into an alliance with a regional party in each of these, but it is a substantial presence in its own right in these states. In this category we include Haryana, alliance with the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) till recently; Maharashtra, alliance with the Shiv Sena (SS); Karnataka, alliance with the Lok Shakti (LS); and Orissa, alliance with the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

Finally, we have two states where the 1990s have seen a multi-party competition, reducing the Congress to the status of a minor party. Thus in Bihar the competition is between the Congress, the BJP, the Samata Party (SAP), and the Janata Dal (JD), later the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) while in Uttar Pradesh there has been a four-way competition involving the Congress, the BJP, the BSP, and the Samajwadi Party (SP).

That leaves a few states and union territories including Jammu and Kashmir and several small hill states of the north-east. Since there is no reliable survey data on these states, we have excluded these from our classification and subsequent analysis. But in principle all these can be put under one or the other of these categories.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the distribution of the vote in these five types of contest in the 1996 and 1998 elections, respectively. As we can see, there were very substantial differences in the patterns of party support in these five broad groupings, and the patterns were fairly stable over the course of these two elections. There is of course considerable variation within each of the groupings in the actual level of Congress support, no doubt depending on particular state-level factors, and we would not wish to claim that the groupings make all state-level analysis redundant. We shall try to show, nonetheless, that these groupings have considerable explanatory potential.

While there have been considerable changes over time in the nature of party competition in India, it is noteworthy that broadly comparable groupings can be found in earlier periods too. In Table 4.3 we construct an analogous grouping for 1967. The choice of the 1967 election as a point of reference is guided by the fact that it is only in 1967 that the non-Congress parties gathered enough support to allow us to carry out any analysis of their social profile. In terms of data availability, 1971 is a better point, for the survey that year was more comprehensive. However, the existence of various pre-poll alliances—the grand alliance of the major opposition parties and the Congress—Communist Party of India (CPI) alliance in that election prevents us from obtaining a clear picture of individual party preferences.

All-India Picture: 1967, 1996, and 1998

Out central concern is to explore where the Congress vote comes from in our five types of party competition. Before proceeding to this disaggregated analysis of the social base of voting, however, it is useful to look at the all-India picture to provide us with a baseline for comparison. Our main sources are the National Election Study (NES) of 1996 and 1998. For comparison, we also go back to the first ever nationwide survey of the Indian electorate carried out by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

TABLE 4.1: Vote Shares by Major Party Groupings in Five Types of Contest in Lok Sabha Elections, 1996

State	INC+	BJP+	JD	LF	BSP	IND	Others
INC vs BJP contests							
Delhi	37.3	49.9	4.2	0.4	0.0	3.4	4.7
Gujarat	38.7	48.9	0.4	0.1	0.4	7.5	4.1
Himachal Pradesh	54.3	39.8	0.2	1.4	0.7	1.5	2.1
MP	31.0	41.5	1.1	0.8	8.2	9.6	7.9
Rajasthan	40.5	43.5	2.6	0.6	1.3	7.2	4.2
INC vs LF contests							
Kerala	45.7	5.7	4.4	36.1	0.2	2.8	5.1
West Bengal	40.2	7.0	0.4	48.7	0.1	2.0	1.6
Tripura	34.1	6.5	0.3	52.4	0.0	0.9	5.7
INC in multi-party contests							
Bihar	12.99	35.04	33.23	5.92	0.63	5.48	6.71
UP	8.14	34.44	25.10	1.06	20.61	6.55	4.10

(Contd.)

TABLE 4.1 contd.

	INC+	BJP+	LF	Regional	Others	IND
INC vs regional parties						
Andhra Pradesh	39.3	5.7	5.3	TDP(N): 32.6	13.4	3.6
Assam	31.6	16.0	3.9	AGP: 27.2	8.6	11.7
Goa	34.4	13.8	0.9	UGDP: 22.7	22.7	1.5
Meghalaya	53.6	9.1	1.4	IND: 35.8	0.0	0.0
Punjab	35.1	6.6	4.3	SAD: 28.7	15.1	7.6
Pondicherry	40.0	4.4	0.0	DMK: 39.9	9.3	6.4
Tamil Nadu	26.1	3.0	4.1	DMK+TMC(M): 52.8	9.5	3.1

	INC+	BJP	BJP ally	JD	Others	IND
INC vs BJP led regional parties						
Haryana	22.6	19.7	HVP: 15.2 SAP: 19.0	1.5		10.2
Karnataka	33.4	24.9	–	34.9		4.2
Maharashtra	34.8	21.8	SS: 16.8	3.3		9.7
Orissa	44.9	13.4		30.1		5.7

Notes: Parties represent pre-poll aliances, BJP+=BJP, SS, HVP; and SAP; INC+= INC and AIADMK; LF=CPI, CPM, FBL, and RSP (plus Left-supported independents in Kerala).

Source: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) data unit.

TABLE 4.2: Vote Shares by Major Party Groupings in Five Types of Contest in Lok Sabha Elections, 1998

State	INC	BJP	LF	BSP	Others 1	Others 2	IND	Others
INC vs BJP								
Delhi	42.7	50.8	–	2.3	JD: 2.5	–	0.5	1.4
Gujarat	36.5	48.3	0.1	–	AIRJP: 10.2	JD: 2.9	1.1	0.9
Himachal	43.6	48.6	0.7	1.5	–	–	–	5.6
MP	39.4	45.7	0.9	8.7	–	–	1.3	4.0
Rajasthan	44.5	41.7	1.9	2.1	–	–	3.8	6.0
INC vs LF								
Kerala	38.7	8.0	32.0	0.1	MUL: 5.0	KECM: 24	6.8	7.0
Tripura	42.1	8.2	48.8	–	–	–	0.3	0.6
West Bengal	15.2	10.2	46.8	0.2	WBTC: 24.4	–	1.0	2.2
INC in multi-party contests								
Bihar	7.4	23.5	3.9	0.5	RJD: 26.3	SAP: 16.0	2.0	20.4
UP	6.0	36.5	0.4	20.9	SP: 28.7	–	2.8	4.7

(Contd.)

TABLE 4.2 contd.

	INC	BJP	LF	BSP	Others 1	Others 2	IND	Others
INC vs regional parties								
Andhra Pradesh	38.5	18.3	5.5	0.2	TDP: 32.0	AIMIM: 1.5	1.7	2.3
Assam	39.0	24.5	4.2	–	AGP: 12.7	ASDC: 2.2	9.5	7.9
Goa	31.6	30.0	–	–	UGDP: 24.9	MAG: 13.2	0.3	–
Meghalaya	47.6	9.0	1.4	–	UDP: 25.5	HPDP: 7.4	–	9.1
Punjab	25.9	11.7	4.5	12.7	SAD: 32.9	JD: 4.1	4.9	3.3
Pondicherry	32.1	–	–	0.6	DMK: 41.1	ADMK: 25.1	0.2	0.9
Tamil Nadu	4.8	6.9	3.1	0.2	ADMK+: 25.9	TMC+DMK: 20.2	2.5	36.4

	INC	BJP	LF	BSP	BJP ally 1	Others	IND	Others
INC vs BJP-led regional parties parties								
Haryana	26.0	18.9	0.5	7.7	HVP: 11.6	HLDR: 25.9	1.2	8.2
Karnataka	36.2	27.0	0.1	0.6	LS: 11.5	JD: 21.7	0.8	2.1
Maharashtra	43.6	22.5	0.7	0.8	SHS: 19.6	RPI: 4.1	2.4	6.3
Orissa	41.0	21.2	1.4	0.3	BJD: 27.5	JD: 4.9	0.4	3.3

Notes: INC+=INC and Muslim League, UDF; BJP+=BJP, SHS, HVP, SAP, AIADMK, SAD(B), Trinamool Congress, LS, BJD, and TDP(NTR); LF=CPI, CPM, FBL, and RSP.

Source: CSDS data unit.

TABLE 4.3: Vote Shares by Major Party Groupings in Four Types of Contest in Lok Sabha Elections, 1967

		The Right		The Left				
	INC	SWA	BJS	Communist	Social	Regional	IND	Others
INC vs the Right								
Gujarat	46.9	39.9	–	–	1.7	–	9.5	2.0
Madhya Pradesh	40.8	2.7	29.6	1.4	8.7	–	13.7	3.2
Orissa	33.3	30.9	0.6	3.9	20.5	–	10.8	–
Rajasthan	40.0	27.0	10.3	5.2	2.7	–	14.8	–
Uttar Pradesh	33.4	4.8	22.2	4.9	14.0	–	17.1	4.1
INC vs the Left								
Bihar	34.8	3.4	11.1	10.2	26.4	–	14.0	1.3
Kerala	36.2	2.3	1.4	32.6	8.4	11.7	7.4	0.2
West Bengal	39.7	0.8	1.4	24.8	2.7	4.9	15.3	–
INC vs regional								
Punjab	37.3	4.7	12.5	6.2	0.4	27.0	9.3	2.6
Tamil Nadu	41.7	9.2	0.2	8.8	0.1	35.8	4.1	–
INC vs divided opposition								
Andhra Pradesh	46.8	13.8	1.4	18.8	0.5	–	18.1	0.6
Haryana	44.1	5.6	19.9	2.5	5.9	–	19.8	2.3
Karnataka	49.0	14.3	2.3	1.6	7.7	–	22.0	3.1
Maharashtra	48.5	1.0	7.4	5.1	6.3	7.5	11.5	12.7
Total	40.8	8.7	9.4	9.4	8.0	6.6	13.7	3.4

Notes: SWA=Swatantra Party; BJS=Bharatiya Jana Sangh; Socialist=Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP); Communist=CPI and CPIL [later CPI(M)].

Source: CSDS data unit.

(CSDS) in 1967. We should, however, note that the 1967 survey was a relatively small one and restricted to male electors. The results from 1967 should therefore be treated with caution.

For a first look at the data we restrict ourselves to a simple classificatory scheme, a composite measure of caste and religion which we shall term for short a measure of 'community' (see Appendix 4.3 for technical details). The measure distinguishes the following six community groupings; (1) Hindu upper castes; (2) Hindu backward castes or the 'other backward classes' (OBCs); (3) Scheduled Castes (SCs) or 'dalits'; (4) Scheduled Tribes (STs) or 'adivasis'; (5) Muslims; and (6) other religious groups (non-Scheduled Caste/Schedules Tribe Christians, Sikhs, and remainders). We are conscious of the fact that these 'communities' do not represent the primary social cleavages at the ground level. These communities are themselves aggregates of a large number of lived in social communities. In later analysis we plan to use a finer classification of 'jati' groupings (in particular disaggregating the OBC), but the present classification should be adequate to give us a first cut of the broad picture of the social basis of Congress support.

We begin, in Table 4.4, with the picture for 1967. Among the respondents to the survey, 50 per cent reported that they had voted for the Congress. As we can see, the figures for the different community groups are all fairly close to this overall figure of 50 per cent: they range from a low of 45 per cent among the Muslims to a high of 57 per cent among the dalits. All these figures will be subject to sampling error, and we have in fact had to exclude the figures for adivasis since the base N is a tiny 30 respondents. Some of the differences are in fact statistically significant but the magnitude of the differences is relatively small. The overall picture, therefore, is the conventional one that Congress support did not vary strongly by community group at the all-India level.

At the all-India level, the picture had not changed greatly by 1996. In 1996, 31 per cent of our respondents reported that they had voted for the Congress. Table 4.5 shows that the proportions of dalits, Muslims, and especially adivasis supporting the Congress were higher than the overall average of 31 per cent, while the proportion of OBCs supporting the Congress was lower than the overall average. This pattern was again repeated, as Table 4.6 shows, in the 1998 Lok Sabha election.

TABLE 4.4: All India Vote By Community in Lok Sabha Elections, 1967

		The Right		The Left			
	INC	BJS	SWA	Socialist	Communist	Others	N
Hindu upper	48	15	7	8	5	17	543
Hindu OBC	47	7	7	5	9	25	630
Dalit	57	5	4	8	8	18	275
Adivasi	–	–	–	–	–	–	30
Muslim	45	2	12	13	3	25	168
Other	59	4	5	2	1	29	195
All	50	8	7	7	6	22	1841

Notes: 1. Unless otherwise specified, in this and all subsequent tables, the entries are for the percentage of respondents belonging to different communities who reported voting for various parties in the relevant survey. The last column, 'N', is the total number of respondents of that community/class that form the basis of the percentage calculation.

2. Socialist = PSP and SSP; Communist = CPI and CPI(M).

Source: National Election Study (NES), 1967.

TABLE 4.5: All India Vote by Community in Lok Sabha Elections, 1996

	INC	INC Allies	BJP	BJP Allies	NF	LF	BSP	Others	N
Hindu upper	31	0	41	10	4	7	0	7	2104
Hindu OBC	24	2	25	6	16	7	3	19	2698
Dalit	36	0	15	1	6	13	14	15	1570
Adivasi	45	0	22	1	7	8	1	16	751
Muslim	38	0	3	1	30	12	1	15	873
Other	30	0	10	1	13	8	3	36	262
All	31	1	24	5	12	9	4	15	8258

Notes: In this and subsequent tables for 1996 election, LF=CPI, CPM, FBL, RSP; INC allies= AIADMK and UDF partners; BJP allies=Shiv Sena, HVP and Samata; NF=JD, and SP.

Source: NES, 1996.

TABLE 4.6: All India Vote by Community in Lok Sabha Elections, 1998

	INC	INC Allies	BJP	BJP Allies	NF	LF	BSP	Others	N
Hindu upper	27	0	38	16	5	10	1	3	1841
Hindu OBC	23	5	28	14	16	5	2	7	2707
Dalit	32	3	14	8	13	11	12	7	1250
Adivasi	47	1	22	6	7	6	1	12	635
Muslim	38	12	5	2	28	9	1	4	831
Other	43	1	12	17	15	7	3	3	212
All	30	4	25	12	14	8	3	6	7476

Notes: In this and subsequent tables on 1998 election INC allies=Muslim League and UDF; BJP allies=Shiv Sena, HVP, Samata, AIADMK, SAD(B), Trinamool Congress, Lokshakti, BJD, and TDP(NTR); NF=JD, RJD, and SP.

Source: NES, 1998.

It is not, then, quite correct to say that the Congress recruits a representative cross-section of the electorate, even at the all-India level. There does seem to be a fairly stable social profile to the Congress support, and it is notable that hints of the same profile can be found as far back as 1967. Thus, in all three surveys the OBCs were less inclined than other groups to support the Congress while the dalits and adivasis were more inclined towards the Congress than were other community groups. The only exception are the Muslims, whose pattern of support appears to have been somewhat variable over time. Given the uncertainty about the 1967 survey, however, we should be extremely cautious about reading too much into this charge (and it is perhaps worth noting that the 1971 survey showed the more usual pattern of the Muslims supporting the Congress).

It is however, fair to say that, at this all-India level, the magnitude of the group differences in support for the Congress is relatively small. A useful measure of the magnitude of the group differences is the odds ratio. We can, for example, look at the odds of supporting the Congress or some other party among members of a particular community group and compare this with the odds of supporting the Congress in the sample as a whole. This will give us a measure of how distinctive a particular group is. For example, in 1998, 47 per cent of the adivasis voted the Congress while 53 per cent voted for some other party—odds of 47:53 or 0.89:1. In 1998, the overall level of support in the survey for the Congress was 30 per cent giving odds of 30:70 or 0.43:1. The ratio of these two odds in 2.07:1. A ratio of 1:1 would indicate that the odds of supporting the Congress was exactly the same in the group in question as it was overall, while odds larger than 1:1 would indicate stronger support in the particular group, and odds below 1:1 would indicate lower support. In this way we can use the odds ratio to tell us how distinctive a particular group is in its voting pattern.

Odds ratios have a number of convenient statistical properties, and they are particularly useful for making comparisons overtime or between state groupings. Their main advantage is that they in effect take account of changes in the overall level of support for a party and thus enable us to make comparisons between elections or regions when the overall level of support is rather different. Table 4.7 shows the odds ratios for the 1967, 1996, and 1998 elections.

Table 4.7 suggests that there was actually slightly greater variation in the odds ratios in the 1990s than there had been in the 1960s. In 1967, all the odds ratios were quite close to 1:1, ranging from 0.90 to 1.20. The range was substantially higher in 1996 and higher still in 1998, ranging from 0.72 for the OBCs to 2.07 for the adivasis. At the all-India level, then, there does seem to have been a clear increase in the extent to which the various community groups differed in their support for the Congress. In this sense the social basis of the Congress support has become more distinct over time.

TABLE 4.7: Odds Ratios of Congress/Non-Congress Support by Community, 1967, 1996, and 1998

	1967	1996	1998
Hindu upper	0.96	0.96	0.87
Hindu OBC	0.93	0.79	0.72
Dalit	1.14	1.21	1.10
Adivasis	1.20	1.81	2.07
Muslim	0.90	1.34	1.44
Other	1.17	0.93	1.73
N	1841	8358	7476

Source: NES, 1967, 1996, 1998.

We can test formally whether the odds ratios have remained constant over time by using a log-linear model (see Appendix 4.1). We fit to the data a model which postulates that support for the Congress varied from the election to election, that support for the Congress varied from one community group to another, but that this relationship between Congress support and community remained the same in all three elections (see Appendix 4.1 for details). What we find is that the hypothesis of constant odds ratios has to be rejected ($p < 0.001$). This confirms more rigorously the conclusion we had drawn from Table 4.7. That is, at the all-India level, the conventional wisdom that Congress received more or less equal support from all community groups alike is less true than it used to be.

A look at voting by class (see Appendix 4.2 for details) for the 1996 and 1998 elections in Tables 4.8 and 4.9, respectively reveals a substantially similar picture. While the BJP vote display a steep slope in favour of the upper classes and the Left Front (LF) and BSP vote shows an opposite slope, the vote for the Congress is evenly spread across all classes in 1996. The pattern for 1998 is a little

TABLE 4.8: All India Vote by Class in Lok Sabha Elections, 1996

	INC	INC Allies	BJP	BJP Allies	NF	LF	BSP	Others	N
Rich	31	–	42	6	8	3	1	10	472
Upper middle	30	1	35	4	10	7	1	12	1659
Middle	32	1	24	5	12	8	3	15	1680
Poor	32	–	20	6	13	10	5	15	2704
Poorest	32	1	16	4	13	11	6	18	1780
All	31	1	24	5	12	9	4	15	8295

Source: NES, 1996.

TABLE 4.9: All India Vote by Class in Lok Sabha Elections, 1998

	INC	INC Allies	BJP	BJP Allies	NF	LF	BSP	Others	N
Rich	35	2	38	9	9	3	1	4	498
Upper middle	29	3	33	11	13	6	2	4	1574
Middle	31	3	24	13	13	8	3	5	1687
Poor	30	5	21	12	15	7	4	7	2308
Poorest	28	4	20	10	15	12	4	8	1418
All	30	4	25	12	14	8	3	6	7485

Source: NES, 1998.

more erratic, but it also shows that the vote for the Congress is not concentrated in some classes. The survey data at our disposal does not permit a class index for 1967 that can be strictly compared to these two elections. But it may not be off the mark to think that at the national level the support for the Congress has continued to be spread across the class divide in the entire post-independence period.

Differentiation in Congress Era

Now we move on to consider the pattern of social support for the Congress in different types of contest in the Congress era by taking up the 1967 election as an example. Table 4.10 shows the relationships between community and vote in the four types of contest that we were able to distinguish in 1967.

Barring a few cells, Table 4.10 does not show any striking difference in the support base of the Congress in different categories. The Congress appears to be weak among the upper castes in the contest against the Left and the Right and stronger among the dalits in all the categories. Unfortunately, the small sample size of the 1967 survey at the regional level also renders the picture rather confusing and unreliable. What we need to do here is to conduct some formal statistical tests which tell us whether there were any statistically significant differences in the bases of the Congress support in the four types of contest. Table 4.11 therefore shows the pattern of Congress/non-Congress odds ratios in the four types of contest and indicates which ones are significantly different from the all-India pattern. As we can see, there were some significant results only in the case of the contest between the Congress and the Right. In particular, the odds of the upper castes supporting the Congress were significantly poorer in these contests (an odds ratio of 0.67:1) than they were in general (0.96:1). Conversely, the odds of the dalits supporting the Congress were significantly greater in this type of contest (1.65:1 compared with the overall 1.14:1 for the dalits).

There is, then, a clear and understandable pattern here: Congress support was less evenly drawn from the various community groups when it was in competition with the Right than it appeared to be overall. Protest against the one-party dominance of the Congress began among the upper castes who were more inclined to support the Right rather than the Congress when the structure of party

TABLE 4.10: Vote by Community in Four Types of Contests, 1967

Congress vs Right contest

	INC	Right	Others	N
Hindu upper	43	43	14	234
Hindu OBC	55	35	10	220
Dalit	65	14	21	139
Adivasi	–	–	–	12
Muslim	50	24	26	92
Other	68	10	22	62
Total	53	30	17	759

Congress vs Left contest

	INC	Right	Others	N
Hindu upper	35	48	17	71
Hindu OBC	42	46	22	77
Dalit	–	–	–	18
Muslim	–	–	–	33
Other	–	–	–	7
Total	40	47	13	206

Congress vs regional party contest

	INC	Right	Others	N
Hindu upper	–	–	–	17
Hindu OBC	39	39	22	173
Dalit	57	32	11	56
Muslim	–	–	–	4
Other	62	26	12	81
Total	47	34	19	331

Congress vs divided opposition contest

	INC	Others	N
Hindu upper	68	32	190
Hindu OBC	62	38	123
SC	–	–	43
ST	–	–	18
Muslim	–	–	23
Other	–	–	30
Total	66	34	427

Notes: The Right=SWA and BJS; Percentages are nor reported when the base N is less than 50

The Left=CPIL, CPIR, PSP, and SSP; Regional parties are Shiromani Akali Dal and DMK.

Source: NES, 1967.

TABLE 4.11: Odds Ratios of Congress/Non-Congress Support in Different Types of Contests, 1967

	All	vs Right	vs Left	vs Regional	vs Divided Oopposition
Hindu upper	0.96	0.67 *	0.81	–	1.10
Hindu OBC	0.93	1.08	1.09	0.72	0.84
Dalit	1.14	1.65 *	–	1.49	–
Adivasi	–	–	–	–	–
Muslim	0.90	0.89	–	–	–
Other	1.17	1.88	–	1.84	–
N	1841	759	206	331	427

Notes: * Significantly different at the 0.01 level from the expected value for that community group. The odds ratio has not been reported where the base N is less than 50.

Source: NES, 1967.

competition gave them the opportunity. But the appeal of the Right to the upper castes was mirrored by its lack of appeal to the dalits, who consequently were relatively inclined towards the Congress as the main alternative to the Right.

In overall terms, the propensity of the various community groups to support the Congress in 1967 varied, but only slightly so, according to the nature of party competition, with the presence in some states of a major right-wing alternative to the Congress leading to a more distinctive community profile in those particular states. It was only the contest with the Right that showed distinctive patterns of social cleavage in 1967. We must remember that the small sample sizes in other types of contest make it very difficult to find statistically significant results. But on the current evidence we must conclude that in other types of contest there was little variation from the general picture, with most groups showing rather similar levels of support for the Congress. A differentiation of the Congress' social profile had begun, but it was nothing compared to the disjunction that we observe in the 1990s.

Disjunction in the Post-Congress Era

We can now jump to the 1990s, the post-Congress era. It is post-Congress not in the sense that the Congress ceases to be a major player; indeed the Congress continues to be a major player in all but a few states. It is post-Congress in the sense that the Congress ceases to be the pole around which the political competition is structured. We also move on to the larger and hence more robust surveys of 1996 and 1998. These surveys allow us to construct a reliable class index, besides the familiar community groupings. Table 4.12 show the relationship between community and class on the one hand and vote on the other in the five types of contest which we have distinguished for the 1990s. We begin with the Congress versus BJP contests.

In terms of community as well as class, the Congress appears to be a party of the underdogs when it faces the BJP. In this first type of contest there is a strong relationship between community and support for the Congress. As expected, support for the Congress was at its strongest among the Muslims, where it reached 85 per cent in 1998. It was also high among the dalits and adivasis and then fell to 35 per cent and 32 per cent among the OBCs and upper castes

TABLE 4.12: Congress vs BJP Contests, 1996 and 1998

	1996				1998			
	Congress	BJP	Others	N	Congress	BJP	Others	N
Vote by community								
Hindu upper	33	64	3	628	32	65	3	459
Hindu OBC	34	54	12	405	35	58	7	436
Dalit	54	34	12	391	57	34	9	214
Adivasi	60	32	8	314	54	43	3	245
Muslim	76	8	16	89	85	12	3	68
Other	–	–	–	28	–	–	–	34
All	44	47	9	1855	43	52	5	1456
Vote by class								
Rich	33	61	6	203	43	53	4	210
Upper middle	37	56	7	469	38	58	4	385
Middle	45	45	10	394	43	50	7	327
Poor	49	41	10	505	46	44	10	349
Poorest	54	38	8	304	44	49	7	232
All	44	47	9	1875	43	51	6	1503

(Contd.)

TABLE 4.12 contd.

	Congress	BJP	Others	N
Vote by community, assembly elections, 1998				
Hindu upper	36	54	10	5151
Hindu OBC	42	44	14	4933
Dalit	53	27	20	2696
Adivasi	53	43	4	1108
Muslim	76	13	11	1371
Other	53	36	11	637
All	46	41	13	15,896

Notes: The small difference between the N reported for class and the one reported for community pertaining to the same survey and the same states occurs because of non-availability of community or class identification information in a few cases.

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998; Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi Assembly Elections Exit polls 1998, CSDS.

respectively in 1998. The sources of support for the BJP were the mirror image, being strongest in the upper castes where it reached 65 per cent, then falling steadily as we move down to the OBCs and dalits, followed by a sharp break between the Hindus and Muslims. In both the elections the Congress is favoured more by the groups lower down in the social hierarchy. The steep slope of the class profile for 1996 brings out the relationship most sharply. The poorer the voter, the greater the chances of their voting for the Congress and vice versa for the BJP. Unlike in the case of community, the class profile for 1998 is more diffused for the Congress. In overall terms the BJP represents social and economic privileges and the Congress its reverse when these two parties face each other.

This pattern is not specific to these two elections associated with the decline of the Congress. The same was replicated in the 1998 assembly elections for Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi, where the Congress scored spectacular victory. We have the advantage of very large size exit polls conducted by the CSDS and its associates for these assembly elections. These exit poll data provide perhaps the most authoritative source of voting patterns in the 'Hindi heartland' and confirm that support for the Congress shows a clear social profile in this group of states. Despite its overall victory the Congress trailed behind the BJP among the upper caste Hindus and managed to split evenly the OBC votes. It was its decisive lead among the dalits and Muslims, and to a lesser extent among the adivasis, that gave the Congress the decisive edge.

We next move on to the second of our five types of party competition, namely the contests where the principal contenders were the Congress and the Left Front. The results are shown in Table 4.13.

The picture is reversed in this case. The same Congress that is the natural party of the underprivileged when it confronts the BJP turns out to be a party of the socially and economically privileged in its contest with the communist parties in Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura. Table 4.13 shows that both in 1996 and in 1998, the vote for the Left goes up as one goes down the Hindu ritual hierarchy, from the upper castes to the OBCs to the dalits. The strongest support for the Left comes from among the dalit voters, reaching 62 per cent in both years. The OBCs also showed above-average support for the Left in both years. We can also see in Table 4.13 how the LF has eaten sharply into

TABLE 4.13: Congress vs LF Contests, 1996 and 1998

	1996				1998				
	Congress	LF	Others	N	Congress	BJP+	LF	Others	N
Vote by community									
Hindu upper	43	44	13	291	17	17	45	21	361
Hindu OBC	28	56	16	244	28	15	54	3	172
Dalit	24	63	13	305	15	12	62	11	189
Adivasi	–	–	–	14	–	–	–	–	9
Muslim	36	47	17	195	44	5	40	21	51
Other	61	33	6	54	70	4	26	–	57
All	34	49	17	1103	26	13	48	13	939
Vote by class									
Rich	58	31	11	26	40	27	27	6	30
Upper middle	40	45	15	224	24	29	44	3	178
Middle	37	49	14	230	29	27	41	3	281
Poor	32	52	16	400	29	17	53	1	246
Poorest	27	64	9	223	20	23	57	–	209
All	34	52	14	1103	26	24	48	2	944

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

the Congress support among the Muslims. In this type of contest the Muslims divided their vote more or less evenly between the Congress and the LF, whereas as we saw earlier, in states where the BJP had been the main opposition, the Congress had taken the lion's share of the Muslim vote. Perhaps in consequence, the Congress' profile changes dramatically from the one that we saw in the first group of states. The picture gets somewhat muddled in 1998 largely due to the rise of the Trinamool Congress at the expense of the Congress in West Bengal.

But the class profile remained fairly sharp in both the elections. Table 4.13 shows that the percentage of the poorest who voted for the Congress was almost half of the rich who did so. The vote share of the non-Left parties among the poor and the poorest was lower than their own average. The vote for the Left did indeed have the kind of class profile the communist parties would like to have: the poorer the voters the greater the vote for the Left. In its contest with the LF, the Congress tended to receive the support of those groups that had voted for the BJP in the first type of contest.

Unlike the first two groupings the contest of the Congress with regional parties does not reveal a very clear social or economic profile. Various community groups show relatively little variation in their support in the contest between the regional and the national parties. We need to be rather careful here since the various regional parties that we have grouped together here are a rather heterogeneous set and have their own distinctive identities. In this group we have classical regional parties (those with a regional support base and regional ideology) mainly from the south and peripheries. However, there are some distinctive patterns. Table 4.14 shows that in both the elections the regional parties tended to do better among the OBCs and 'others' (mainly Sikhs) than other communities. In 1996 the dalits gave more support to the regional parties than did the upper castes. However, this pattern was not replicated in 1998. The class profile also showed a fairly even spread of party support, except a tendency of the regional parties to be a bit middle heavy. On balance, the Congress seems to mirror the catch-all character of the regional parties in this set. It is useful to contrast this with the social profile of the BJP within this set. It received more support from the upper castes and very little from the Muslims, higher support from the upper classes and lower from the poor. So, unlike

TABLE 4.14: Congress vs Regional Parties Contests, 1996 and 1998

	1996				1998				
	INC	Regional	Others	N	INC	BJP+	Regional	Others	N
Vote by community									
Hindu upper	36	27	37	264	38	28	24	10	227
Hindu OBC	31	45	24	819	27	28	31	14	635
Dalit	35	50	15	327	24	16	27	33	300
Adivasi	31	38	31	177	35	11	31	23	128
Muslim	40	44	16	188	53	4	34	9	163
Other	18	58	24	127	23	38	15	24	95
All	33	43	24	1902	31	22	28	19	1548
Vote by class									
Rich	32	33	35	94	32	27	23	18	99
Upper middle	33	41	26	344	32	25	28	15	317
Middle	34	46	20	396	28	25	31	16	354
Poor	31	45	24	577	36	16	30	18	422
Poorest	34	42	22	498	28	18	28	26	358
All	33	44	23	1909	31	21	28	20	1550

Notes: 1996 Regional = TDP(N), AGP, UGDP, SAD, DMK, TMC(M), IND(in Meghalaya); 1998 Regional = TDP, AGP, UGDP, SAD, DMK, TMC(M), UDP.

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

the Congress, BJP support shows the same character irrespective of the nature of the contest in which it is engaged.

The above generalization about the regional parties is, however, not true when the regional parties in question are from the states where the BJP leads the coalition. Here the BJP–regional alliance had a profile similar to that of the BJP. If anything, the regional allies like the Shiv Sena tended to be more upper caste dependent than the BJP in both the elections. The Congress had its strength among the Muslims and the dalits. The 1998 election saw the Congress improve its share among these two communities, but not among the OBCs. In class terms, too, there was a neat relationship between voting for the Congress and being less well-off, though the slope was less steep than in the case of a direct Congress–BJP contest. The class pattern of voting for the BJP and its regional ally was not very clear or robust in this instance.

Finally, we turn to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where the Congress faced multi-cornered competition from parties that sought to walk away with different slices of the Congress rainbow. In Bihar, the BJP and Samata Party ate into Congress support among the upper castes, while the JD ate into Congress support among the OBCs and Muslims, and, to a lesser extent, among the dalits as well. In economic terms, the Samata–BJP alliance took the upper class vote while the JD showed a clear lower class support, much like the Left in the second group of states, leaving the Congress with the remainder in all the classes.

In the four-way contest in Uttar Pradesh (UP), some of the main players were different but the effect was much the same. The SP played a similar role in Uttar Pradesh as the JD in Bihar—it was also very strong among the Muslims and OBCs—except that it had no support among the dalits and was not as strong among the poorest. Here the presence of a dalit formation, the BSP, accounted for a huge slice of the dalit vote. And this meant that the BJP support was even more heavily concentrated in the upper caste than it is in the other types of contest.

As a result, with distinctive parties capturing upper caste, OBC, dalit, and Muslim votes in Uttar Pradesh, there remained no major group supporting the Congress. In community terms the UP in the 1990s shows a more developed form of cleavage politics than any other Indian state. The same gets reflected in class terms to the extent to which these communities have a distinct class profile.

The BJP was strongly rooted among the upper classes and the BSP among the poor. The SP tended to draw more votes from the lower classes but was not confined to them, since the class profile of the OBCs and Muslims is more diversified than that of the upper castes and dalits.

The 1998 election witnessed a swing towards the BJP and its allies in both these states. However, the social basis of voting in 1998 remained remarkably similar to that of 1996. The RJD inherited the JD legacy in Bihar, despite losing some of the OBC and a significant part of its dalit votes to the parent party. Squeezed from both the ends, the Congress lost its strength among the dalit and Muslim voters, notwithstanding its alliance with the RJD. The alliance did give the Congress a lower class profile similar to the RJD, thought the latter had lost its steep class profile due to the departure of some of the dalit and lower OBC voters. The BJP–Samata alliance retained its upper caste vote but expanded its vote base among other communities and in this process also broad-based its class appeal.

The picture of community patterns in voting shows no real difference in 1998 in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP, the SP, and the BSP continued to maintain their hold over the upper castes, Muslims, and dalits respectively, though the BJP gained some dalit votes. In class terms, there was greater polarization, perhaps due to class voting within each of the communities. The BJP was more intensely upper class and the BSP more lower class than before. The Congress ended up with something of an upper class slant in its support base.

From Catch-All to Catch-None

We can summarize the results of Tables 4.12 to 4.17 by looking at the pattern of the odds ratios. In order to simplify, we restrict ourselves to an examination of the Congress/non-Congress odds ratios. That is, we consider the odds of voting either for the Congress, on the one hand, or for some other party, on the other. These odds ratios are shown in Tables 4.18 and 4.19. The first column of these tables shows the all-India odds ratios, and the other columns show the odds ratios in the different types of contest. The figure for the first column in Tables 4.18 and 4.19 are the same as reported earlier in Table 4.7 to show that at the all-India

TABLE 4.15: Congress vs BJP-Led Regional Contests, 1996 and 1998

	1996						1998					
	INC	BJP	BJP Allies	JD	Others	N	INC	BJP	BJP Allies	JD	Others	N
Vote by community												
Hindu upper	36	19	29	9	7	498	44	19	31	3	3	433
Hindu OBC	33	26	16	22	3	554	29	25	26	9	11	722
Dalit	61	9	5	14	11	191	62	9	13	7	9	236
Adivasi	40	17	2	20	21	191	41	11	16	15	17	189
Muslim	60	3	2	26	9	137	64	5	2	19	10	134
Other	26	8	5	23	38	43	–	–	–	–	–	15
All	40	18	15	17	10	1614	41	18	22	9	10	1729
Vote by class												
Rich	33	19	30	11	7	88	33	29	21	6	11	99
Upper middle	36	30	14	15	5	360	38	23	23	5	11	365
Middle	39	18	20	14	9	395	43	19	21	10	7	395
Poor	43	17	14	18	8	650	39	13	26	9	13	622
Poorest	41	11	11	21	16	377	50	19	15	12	4	265
All	40	19	15	17	9	1620	41	18	22	9	10	1746

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

TABLE 4.16: Congress vs Multiparty Contests, 1996

	Bihar					Uttar Pradesh				
	INC	BJP	SAP	JD	N	INC	BJP	SP	BSP	N
Vote by community										
Hindu upper	9	29	54	7	114	8	77	3	1	354
Hindu OBC	6	19	21	50	315	6	40	34	12	426
Dalit	19	14	10	32	108	10	11	6	67	273
Adivasi	26	31	7	20	70	–	–	–	–	3
Muslim	23	1	4	69	92	10	5	61	6	190
All	13	19	21	39	699	8	38	22	20	1246
Vote by class										
Rich	–	–	–	–	16	9	55	14	3	80
Upper middle	11	29	24	30	93	8	55	21	5	278
Middle	12	23	15	43	145	7	43	25	14	223
Poor	12	18	26	36	256	8	29	28	26	432
Poorest	14	12	18	47	194	8	27	15	34	267
All	13	19	21	39	704	8	38	22	30	1280

Source: NES, 1996.

TABLE 4.17: Congress vs Multiparty Contests, 1998

	Bihar					Uttar Pradesh				
	INC	BJP	SAP	RJD	N	INC	BJP	SP	BSP	N
Vote by community										
Hindu upper	9	22	55	–	103	7	77	4	4	256
Hindu OBC	8	16	27	28	353	7	39	31	11	343
Dalit	14	4	21	24	102	8	20	8	56	192
Adivasi	–	–	–	–	47	–	–	–	–	–
Muslim	15	3	2	59	121	10	7	68	6	185
All	14	12	24	27	726	8	39	26	17	976
Vote by class										
Rich	–	–	–	–	6	–	–	–	–	26
Upper middle	7	13	35	24	54	13	50	26	6	164
Middle	17	13	24	28	174	8	43	30	12	287
Poor	17	16	17	30	288	7	36	26	18	369
Poorest	9	6	31	24	203	5	24	21	40	140
All	14	12	24	27	725	8	39	26	17	986

Source: NES, 1998.

TABLE 4.18: Odds Ratios of Congress Vote in Different Types of Contests, 1996

	All	vs BJP	vs LF	vs Regional	vs BJP-led Regional	vs Divided Opposition	
						Bihar	UP
Vote by community							
Hindu upper	0.96	0.63 *	1.46 *	1.14 *	0.84	0.66	1.00
Hindu OBC	0.79	0.66	0.76	0.91	0.74	0.43	0.73
Dalit	1.21	1.49 *	0.61 *	1.09	2.34 *	1.57	1.28
Adivasi	1.81	1.91	–	0.91	1.00	2.36	–
Muslim	1.34	4.03 *	1.09	1.35	2.25 *	2.00	1.28
Other	0.93	–	–	0.45 *	–	–	–
N	8358	1855	1103	1902	1614	699	1246
Vote by class							
Rich	0.90	0.63	(2.68)	0.95	0.74	(2.23)	1.14
Upper middle	0.95	0.75	1.29	1.00	0.84	0.83	1.00
Middle	1.05	1.04	1.14	1.04	0.96	0.92	0.87
Poor	1.05	1.22	0.91	0.91	1.13	0.92	1.00
Poorest	1.05	1.49	0.72	1.04	1.04	1.09	1.00
N	8491	1875	1103	1909	1620	704	1280

Notes: * significantly different at the 0.01 level from the expected value for that community group.
The odds ratio has not been reported where the base N is less than 50.

Source: NES, 1996.

TABLE 4.19: Odds Ratios of Congress Vote in Different Types of Contests, 1998

	All	vs BJP	vs BJP Assembly	vs LF	vs Regional	vs BJP-led Regional	vs Divided Opposition	
							Bihar	UP
Vote by community								
Hindu upper	0.87	0.62	0.66	0.58	1.36	1.13	0.54	0.87
Hindu OBC	0.72	0.71	0.85	1.11	0.82	0.59	0.47	0.87
SC	1.10	1.76	1.32	0.50	0.70	2.35	1.00	1.00
ST	2.04	1.56	1.32	–	1.20	1.00	–	–
Muslim	1.44	7.52	3.72	2.24	2.51	2.56	0.96	1.28
Other	1.73	–	1.32	6.65	0.67	–	–	–
N	7476	1456	15,896	939	1548	1729	726	976
Vote by class								
Rich	0.86	1.00	(1.90)		1.05	0.71	–	(1.00)
Upper middle	0.91	0.81	0.90		1.05	0.88	(0.46)	1.72
Middle	1.15	1.00	1.16		0.87	1.09	1.26	1.00
Poor	1.00	1.13	1.16		1.25	0.92	1.26	0.87
Poorest	0.91	1.04	0.71		0.87	1.44	0.61	0.61
All	7354	1503	944		1550	1746	725	986

Source: NES, 1998 and Assembly Elections Exit Poll 1998.

level the Congress enjoys a catch-all profile. If the figures of the subsequent columns deviate substantially from those reported in the first column, it will support the contention that the Congress is not a catch-all party in the regions defined by the various types of contest.

As we can see, these summary tables show a considerable deviation from the all-India ratios. Take, for example, the community patterns in 1996. Among the upper castes, the all-India ratio was 0.96:1. Since this odds ratio is close to 1:1, it indicates that, in all-India as a whole, the upper castes were not distinctive in their support for Congress, being very close to the average for all community groups. However, moving across the top row of Table 4.17, we can see some rather large deviations from this ratio of 0.96:1, the ratio falling well below 1:1 in the contests with the BJP and rising well above 1:1 in the contests with the LF. There is relatively little variation among the OBCs, but in the third row of the table we see that the dalits varied substantially in their odds of supporting the Congress from one type of contest to another. The overall figure of 1.21:1 suggests that the dalits were not especially distinctive when considered at the all-India level, but we can see that the odds ratio was considerably higher than this in contests with the BJP (or the BJP regionals) but considerably lower in the contests with the LF. A similar pattern obtains with the Muslims.

In short, the type of contest makes a major difference to the support which the various community groups give the Congress. We can test this claim formally with a log-linear model. The hypothesis that the odds ratios are the same in the different types of contests has to be rejected ($\chi^2 = 174.4$ on the 25 degrees of freedom, $p < 0.001$).

The same reasoning can be extended to all the tables to discern an overall pattern. The evidence from both the community and the class patterns of voting in the 1996 and the 1998 elections shows that the Congress is not a catch-all party at levels lower than the all-India aggregates. The only exception to this occurs when the Congress faces the classical regional parties (regional both in outlook and support base) that are themselves catch-all in character. In all other types of contest, the odds of voting for the Congress are substantially lower than average among some sections that have been effectively targeted by its main rival. Thus, in contest

with the BJP or the BJP-led regional alliance, the Congress gets less support from the upper class and upper castes and depends excessively on the poor, Muslims, dalits, and adivasis. On the other hand, when it confronts the Left the odds of the poor and dalits voting for the Congress fall substantially below those of the upper castes and the well-to-do. In those states where the Congress faces multi-cornered competition the odds ratios are deceptively even in their spread. But this is better interpreted as a 'catch-none' situation, for in appealing equally to everyone the Congress appeals to no one in particular and gets edged out of the electoral race in states like UP. Alternatively, as in Bihar, it simply reflects the social profile of its dominant electoral ally.

Whither Congress?

The empirical findings of this paper are easily summarized: The Congress support changes from one type of contest to another. While the all-India figures show relatively little variation in support from one community group to another, we find much bigger variations once we disaggregate. Moreover, the pattern varies from one type of contest to another, but the differences tend to cancel out at the all-India level. Thus, in competition with the BJP including its regional allies, the Congress comes out as a party of the socially and economically marginalized. The same party is supported by the socially and economically privileged when it competes with the Left. While it retains a catch-all character in some states where it faces all-regional parties, it declines into a catch-none formation when it is pushed from more than one direction by various cleavage-based parties. Parties with specific sectional appeal, such as the BJP, BSP, LF, and JD (later the RJD) all have distinctive social bases of their own, whereas the Congress does not seem to have any particular core that is common to its diverse social profile across various types of competition that it faces in different regions.

The more difficult task is to draw conclusions from these findings about the future of the party in the context of its current decline. Clearly, the general debate about the strength and the drawbacks of a catch-all party in competition with cleavage based rivals is only partially relevant here. We have seen that the Congress is a catch-all formation only in a deceptive, aggregate

sense. At the level where the effective political choice is made, the Congress is often cleavage based like some of its rivals. It is true that the Indian electoral system has built-in incentives for a party like the Congress that goes for cross-sectional mobilization. Sectional interest-based parties are at a structural disadvantage in this system. The crosscutting of cleavages that characterize the Congress gives it the flexibility to pick up support from a diversity of community groups in various types of contest. It enjoys a much higher 'bounce back' capacity, should its opponents fail in office. Not being tied closely, and therefore not being limited, to the interests of any one distinctive group at the national level has mobilizational advantages.

Some of these advantages are neutralized, however, by the emergence of the state as the effective arena of electoral choice in last decade. In localized and multi-cornered competition, community based mobilization often becomes the most effective strategy for vote gathering. Such a context leaves a party like the Congress vulnerable to community-based rivals like the SP and the BSP who can create a niche for themselves at its expense. The catchment area of these parties is much smaller than the Congress, yet they can be surer of the loyalty of their voters. This is indeed how the Congress was marginalized in the states of UP and Bihar. Besides, the fruits of cross-sectional mobilization can be picked only by those who happen to be situated above the threshold of electoral viability. A party that exists below the threshold of viability—as the Congress does in UP, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal (and, now, also Maharashtra?)—cannot afford to be everyone's friend. It faces gradual erosion unless it can cultivate its own loyal social groups.

Finally, whether a diverse social profile is a source of strength or a handicap depends in large measure on the process by which the profile was acquired. The Congress did have a different social profile in different states in the Congress era as well, but that was acquired and cultivated through active political mobilization. Other parties picked up those votes that the Congress failed to reach or retain. The situation today is different. If the social profile of the Congress voter varies according to the nature of political competion it faces, it is not because the Congress has adopted different tactics *vis-à-vis* different political opponents. The simple reason for this phenomenon is that for over a decade now the

initiative in sectional mobilization has been with the non-Congress parties. The old 'opposition' parties have activated social cleavages in the arena of mobilizational and, then electoral politics, and the Congress has retained those who were not actively mobilized by others. There is, thus, a residual quality to the social profile of the Congress; its profile is no more than the obverse of the profile of its main opponent. To put it less kindly, its shape is like that of a pillow: it reflects that shape of the person who last sat on it. No wonder the Congress enjoys the greatest support among the adivasis, the only 'community' in our six-fold classification that is still not quite politicized. The dalits vote for the Congress but not in those settings where either the BSP or, to some extent, the Left offers a viable political alternative.

When an ageing catch-all party faces a challenge from cleavage-based political formations, it can respond in multiple ways. First of all, it can simply wait for the high threshold of viability in the first-past-the post system to take its toll and nip the emerging challenge in the bud. This can be accompanied or followed by various measures of accommodation and absorption of the challenge. If the challenge crosses that stage, the next option is to isolate the section and pit it against a broader social alliance, thus proving the futility of sectional mobilization. Or it can try to diffuse the social cleavage by subsuming it in an issue cleavage. The dilemma of the Congress in the 1990s is that it faces a section-based challenge that can no longer be contained by these two elementary devices. Various competitors are running away with slices of the rainbow social coalition that characterized the Congress. The historical experience of catch-all parties suggests that, since they have no distinctive group appeal, they are particularly dependent upon their image, issues, and perceived record of governance. The Congress finds today that in widespread public perception it is short on all of these. If faces a challenge of recharging the ideological battery, reinvigorating the organization and reinventing the rainbow social coalition. It is not clear if today's Congress has within it the resources to accomplish this historical task that was last carried out by Indira Gandhi nearly three decades ago. It is not clear if this task can be accomplished without splitting the party into smaller and more vigorous off-shoots, a process that we have seen in the last few years, a process that can open up possibilities of fundamental reconfiguration of the political space.

APPENDIX 4.1

Odds Ratios For Communities

We used the statistical package SPSS to fit the log-linear models. To test whether the odds ratios had remained constant over time, we used the following SPSS instructions:

```
LOGLINEAR INC (0.1) BY COMM (1, 6) SURVEY (1, 3)
/PRINT=DEFAULT ESTIM
/DESIGN=INC, INC BY COMM, INC BY SURVEY
```

where INC is a binary variable measuring the Congress vote (coded 1 if the respondent voted for the Congress, 0 if the respondent voted for some other party, non-voters being excluded); COMM represents the community variable described above in the text, and SURVEY represents the three election surveys (1967 coded 1, 1996 coded 2 and 1998 coded 3).

To test whether the odds ratios were the same in the different types of contest, we used the following SPSS instructions:

```
SELECT IF (SURVEY EQ 2)
LOGLINEAR INC (0.1) BY COMM (1, 6) ZONE (1, 6)
/PRINT=DEFAULT ESTIM
/DESIGN=INC, INC BY COMM, INC BY ZONE
```

where ZONE represents the aggregation of states into the different types of contest as described in the text. In order to be consistent with the tables, we have distinguished Bihar from UP, thus giving six rather than five categories for this variable. Note that SPSS prints out the adjusted standardized residuals from this model. These residuals in effect indicate where the model gives a poor fit. Where the residuals are greater that 2.57 we can say that the deviations from the model are significant at the 0.01 level. However, it must be remembered that some significant residuals will be expected by chance alone.

APPENDIX 4.2

Class Index

The class index is more a measure of occupation/wealth than class itself. The index was constructed using land ownership,

occupation, and house type/monthly income as a residual measure. Those in the top or 'rich' category are people who either have Class-I occupations, such as, lawyers, doctors, and architects, etc., or are large-scale businessmen, or are farmers with more than 20 acres of land. As a top-up category, people who earn more than Rs 20,000 per month are included. The 'upper middle' category contains respondents with Class II and III occupations such as nurses and secondary school teachers and shop assistants, police and army soldiers, or skilled workers, such as electricians, or small-scale businessmen, or farmers with between 10 and 20 acres of land. As a top-up, people who live in *pucca* accommodation are included. The 'middle' category is Class IV employees, craftsmen, and artisans (Group I), semi-skilled workers and petty businessmen and farmers with less than 10 acres of land, and people who live in *pucca–kutcha* accommodation. The 'poor' are craftsmen and artisans (Group II), unskilled workers, domestic servants, poultry and dairy farmers, fishermen, and landowning agricultural labourers and sharecroppers, etc., and people who live in *kutcha* accommodation. The 'poorest' class is for the landless agricultural labourers, shepherds and sharecroppers, etc., and people who live in a hut. For the unemployed, students, and housewives, the index is calculated with reference to their father's/husband's class.

APPENDIX 4.3

Community Classification

Respondents were asked to name their religion and whether they were SC, ST, OBC, or other. The steps of classification followed a sequential selection process. Firstly, if the respondent's religion was Hindu and their caste group was other, they were coded as upper castes. Then, if their religion was Hindu and their caste group was OBC, they were coded as OBCs. Then, irrespective of their religion, if their caste group was Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) they were coded as SC or ST, respectively. Of the remainder, if their religion was Muslim they were coded as Muslim. Finally, if their religion was other than Hindu or Muslim, they were coded as 'other'. Each step overrides the steps that came after it. Thus a Scheduled Tribe Christian is coded as being ST rather than other religion. The actual distribution of

the sample in each of the surveys by these categories is as seen in Table 4.A.1 (see p. 149).

The basic argument of this chapter was first presented in a workshop of Lokniti network of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) on survey research methods in December 1997. We would like to thank all the participants of the workshop, especially Dhirubhai Sheth, for thoughtful comments on the implications of the data and its sponsor, the Indian Council of Social Science Research. The Higher Education Links Programme of the British Council allowed Anthony Heath to spend a few days at the CSDS to work on this paper. Both the authors would like to express their gratitude to Oliver Health and CSDS data unit for research support.

TABLE 4.A.1

	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1991	1996	1998
Hindu upper	27	29	30	36	36	24	25	25
Hindu OBC	36	34	29	29	28	35	33	36
Dalit	16	15	17	18	18	18	19	17
Adivasis	2	2	7	3	4	9	9	8
Muslim	9	9	13	9	10	10	11	11
Other	10	11	4	5	4	4	3	3
Total	1152	1841	2679	2881	2883	6081	8258	7476

Notes: The total, and the percentage of respondents from each community category, relate to the number of respondents who recorded their vote for the given year, and not the total number of members from each community category in our sample.

Source: CSDS Data Unit.

PART II

The Rise and Growth of Hindu Nationalist Politics

5

The Leadership and Organization of the Jana Sangh, 1951 to 1967[+]

B. D. Graham

The central paradox of Indian politics in the 1950s and 1960s is that the party system, although highly differentiated in terms of programmes and doctrines, was unable to organize the mass electorate into clearly defined and separated sectors of social and regional support. With some exceptions, the political parties appeared to float above society, unable to establish a durable and electorally rewarding relationship with the groups whose interests they claimed to represent. Organizational activity, punctuated by membership drives, executive meetings, and large plenary sessions, gave an impression of vitality, but behind these outward forms the party structures lacked substance.

Why were so many parties unable to establish secure bases for themselves? Part of the explanation is that the Congress party was very successful in its attempts to inhibit the development of opposition; as the governing party, it had unmatched resources for patronage and influence, which it could use to support or undermine local factions, and during the run-up to an election it could operate like a great machine, using its wealth and prestige to ensure that its candidates were well supported and well financed in every region. It tended not to rely on zones of safe seats or on established sitting members, but to campaign everywhere, and to compensate for some inevitable losses by taking seats from opposition incumbents and Independents. The result was a quite

[+] Excerpts from *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

exceptional turnover of seats, which made it very difficult for non-Congress parties to anchor themselves in particular regions or localities. The Congress method might not have proved so successful had Indian society, especially in the countryside, responded to party competition by making well-defined claims for particular economic and social benefits but there were few indications that this would happen: the Congress Raj was accepted not only as a political settlement but as the expression of a new economic and social order, exemplified in the various land reforms of the period.

Like other non-Congress parties in the 1950s, the Jana Sangh adapted itself to these circumstances as best it could and experimented with different methods of gaining some purchase in electoral and parliamentary politics. As we shall see, it tried to enter arenas where its Hindu nationalism might have given it an advantage, particularly in controversies about the rights of linguistic, regional, and religious minorities: it also attempted to appeal to a number of sectional interests which might have provided it with a coherent social base; and, in elections, it did its best to match the Congress as a vote-gathering machine. Yet throughout the late 1950s and 1960s it was handicapped, firstly by the suspicion that it was closely tied to, if not dependent upon, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) hierarchy and its organizational headquarters at Nagpur, secondly by its reputation for being an extremist body, with intolerant views on relations between Hindus and other religious communities, and, thirdly, by the inexperience and relative obscurity of its leadership.

Could these deficiencies have been overcome? The answer must be in the affirmative: S. P. Mookerjee had shown that it was possible to make use of RSS support while retaining freedom of manoeuvre and that adherence to Hindu traditions did not exclude parallel appeals to liberal principles. A sufficiently determined leadership could have built a credible and respected party on the foundations which he had laid. A second question then arises: had the Jana Sangh followed such a course, would it have attracted sufficient support to become a major party in opposition? To frame an answer, we must judge whether Nehru did indeed take a serious political risk when he changed the orientation of his party in the course of the 1950s, first, by attempting to erect a fence between the Congress and the Hindu traditionalists, then, by moving industrial policies in the direction of greater state control

and regulation and, finally, by proclaiming, at the Nagpur session of the Congress in January 1959, that the time had come to introduce co-operative joint farming as the next step in land reform. Each of these adjustments of policy represented a challenge not only to specific and privileged interest groups but also to broad layers of the people who, as Hindus, had reason to fear the ruling party's increased emphasis on secularism and pluralism, or who, as owners of small landholdings or small businesses, had reason to resist the steady extension of the power of the state within the economic order. The Jana Sangh had opposed both secularism and collectivism, but it was quite unable to pull together those interests which stood to lose from the application of the Congress party's economic policies, partly because it lacked the skill and means to express its economic liberalism in effective language and partly because its audience suspected it of being more concerned with its cultural than with its economic objectives.

Mookerjee could well have overcome this lack of credibility. His upbringing and education had given him an innate sense of the kinds of policies which were acceptable to the middle classes, those relatively affluent, well-educated, and English-speaking groups which dominated the professional, commercial, and industrial life of India's modern towns and cities. These groups constituted the social and cultural élite, the true inheritors of the social values of the British Raj and the basic court of opinion in the new Republic; generally liberal in outlook, they were likely to react against any attempt by the government to increase the functions of the state at the expense of civil and political liberties. It was to them that Mookerjee was appealing when he suggested, during the campaign for the 1952 elections, that 'one-party rule' was 'tending towards malevolent dictatorship'.[1] Whereas Nehru was inclined to the view that the Congress party alone could be trusted to uphold the regime and protect its nationalist heritage, Mookerjee stressed the need for a constitutional opposition which could offer the basis for an alternative government within the liberal and democratic tradition. However, in this respect he could not rely on the support of the young RSS workers whom he had attracted to the Jana Sangh: they lacked his affinity with the middle classes and were disposed to scorn their anglicized culture and outlook. These young *pracharaks*

[1] *The Times of India*, Delhi, 4 October 1951, p. 5.

from the RSS were puritans, anxious to intensify the party's commitment to Hindu nationalism in the belief that this was the means of producing a new social élite which would be Hindi-speaking, austere, disciplined, and traditional. This difference in perspective was also a difference about timing: Mookerjee wanted to challenge Congress rule without delay, and he apparently believed that middle-class liberalism was compatible with Hindu traditionalism, if not with Hindu nationalism, but the young men of the RSS acted as though they were a brotherhood building for some future time, in which a new élite, imbued with Hindu values, would sweep aside that which had been formed under the Raj.

The fact that there were these contrasting views about the political role of the middle classes explains the differences in approach to the tasks of party-building and organization. Mookerjee was evidently trying to establish the kind of party in which lengthy and discursive plenary sessions could provide some checks on centralized and reasonably accessible executive bodies, such as the working committees of the old-style Congress; this was the type of arrangement which most politically conscious Indians found congenial and could trust. For their part, the young pracharaks placed most emphasis on discipline and, therefore, on the need for a system of overriding controls behind any ostensibly open party apparatus; they also favoured hierarchy and a strict regulation of discussion.

These approaches were ultimately irreconcilable, but during Mookerjee's lifetime there was no serious conflict, mainly because the levels of activity in the party were not sufficiently integrated to reveal serious differences of attitude or practice. Mookerjee was mainly concerned with national politics, and his handling of the party's first two all-India conferences gave people the strong impression that he wanted the organization to be open and responsive and that he was capable of shaping his young RSS lieutenants into a restricted and subordinate bureaucracy. However, in the states and districts the organization was firmly in the hands of RSS men and the strength and durability of their networks of supporters gave them an important advantage over rival groupings within the party.

This article examines the succession crisis set in motion by Mookerjee's death and shows how the young pracharaks, led by Deendayal Upadhyaya, managed to establish their ascendancy. It then describes how the new leadership organized and controlled the party in the late 1950s and early 1960s and concludes with a

discussion of the circumstances which produced strains and tensions within the top echelons of the party in the years leading up to the fourth general elections of 1967.

The Succession Crisis of 1954

Let us return to the proposition that Mookerjee's death in June 1953 deprived the Jana Sangh of the one man who might have built up a solid non-Congress coalition with some prospects of power. He belonged to the top rank of Bengali society. His father, Ashutosh Mookerjee, was a judge of the Calcutta High Court from 1904 until just before his death in 1924, and served for a long period as Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. Born on 6 July 1901, Mookerjee was educated at the University's Presidency College, taking first an arts and then a law degree, and after his father's death went to London, where he studied at Lincoln's Inn and was called to the Bar in 1927. On his return to India, he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1929 as a Congress candidate and again in 1931 as an Independent. Although he was Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University between 1934 and 1938, he was inclined towards a career in politics; he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1937 and joined the Hindu Mahasabha in 1938. In December 1941 he accepted the post of finance minister in the provincial government formed in Bengal by Fazl-ul Huq, but resigned on 21 November 1942. He later became working president of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha and succeeded Savarkar as full-time president at the end of 1944. In national politics his moderation and obvious ability soon attracted widespread support outside his own party and after independence he was appointed to the central government as minister of industries and supplies. In this office he proved himself to be a very able administrator and became a prominent public figure in his own right, so that his resignation from the Cabinet in April 1950 attracted a great deal of interest and speculation.[2] Even after the formation of the Jana Sangh the

[2] For details of Mookerjee's life, see Balraj Madhok, *Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee: A Biography* (New Delhi, n.d.), pp. 2–8; Umaprasad Mookerjee (ed.), *Syama Prasad Mookerjee: His Death in Detention: A Case for Enquiry* (Calcutta, July 1953), pp. 78–80; Walter Andersen, 'The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh—III: Participation in Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 7, no. 13, 25 March–1 April 1972, pp. 678–9. See also letter from Mookerjee to

national press continued to treat his public statements with considerable respect, as if he rather than the new party were the true source of its ideas and programmes. His own personal following was extensive, both in West Bengal and in northern India, and he would have had no difficulty in calling upon outside support had he been challenged within the Jana Sangh by RSS elements.

His nominal successor as leader of the Jana Sangh, Mauli Chandra Sharma, came from a very different background and faced great difficulty in asserting himself in the internal struggle for control of the party.[3] His father, Din Dayal Sharma, had been a Sanskrit scholar and a believer in the orthodox Sanatana Dharma (eternal religion) movement. He had moved from the Rohtak area of the Punjab to Delhi early in the century, and it was there that Mauli Chandra had grown up; he attended Hindu College and went on to study law, but gave that up in 1923 to concentrate on political activity. He attended the Round Table Conference in London in 1930 and 1931 as a member of the Indian States delegation, and later succeeded K.M. Panikkar as secretary to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes.[4] After 1947 he was active in the politics of Delhi and the surrounding region, and had connections with the local RSS hierarchy, but he was relatively unknown in other parts of India.

Sir John Herbert, Governor of Bengal, 16 November 1942, in *India Unreconciled: A Documented History of Indian Political Events from the Crisis of August 1942 to February 1944* (New Delhi, second edition, 1944), pp. 100–7.

[3] For the details of this crisis, see contemporary press statements (e.g. those by Mauli Chandra Sharma himself in the *Statesman* (Delhi), 4 November 1954, pp. 1 and 12; 8 November 1954, p. 1), speeches made by Sharma's sympathizers when the National Democratic Front was formed in 1956 (the preliminary conference was held in Delhi on 2–3 June and the founding conference on 2–3 September) and references to the events of 1954 made in 1973, when Balraj Madhok left the party [see in particular Manga Ram Varshney, *Jana Sangh—RSS and Balraj Madhok* (Aligarh, n.d.)]. See also Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 133–6: Sisir Gupta, 'Parties between the Elections', in S.L. Poplai (ed.), *National Politics and 1957 Elections in India* (Delhi, 1957), p. 37; and H. T. Davey, 'The Transformation of an Ideological Movement into an Aggregative Party: A Case Study of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh', Unpublished D.Phil. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1969, pp. 169–75.

[4] For biographical details, see *Organiser*, Delhi, 4 June 1951, p. 8; 1 February 1954, p. 9.

Sharma stood little chance of being accepted as Mookerjee's successor unless he could obtain the support of the RSS hierarchy. By the early 1950s this organization was as well established in northern India as it was in Maharashtra, and the discipline and loyalty of its cadres enabled its central headquarters in Nagpur to retain effective control over its local units. The young workers which its leadership had sent to help Mookerjee to build up the Jana Sangh now constituted not only the backbone of its administrative hierarchy but also the means by which the national leadership of the RSS could influence its internal affairs.

The principal figure amongst the RSS organizers within the party was Deendayal Upadhyaya, who had helped to establish the Jana Sangh's unit in Uttar Pradesh and had served as its first general secretary. Born on 25 September 1916 in a village in Rajputana and orphaned by the time he was seven, he was cared for by a maternal uncle, who provided for his secondary education. In 1937 he attended the Sanatana Dharma College at Kanpur; there he joined the RSS and having obtained his BA degree in 1939, later went to Agra to read for an MA. Subsequently he studied at Allahabad but became increasingly involved in RSS work; in 1942 he was appointed to be a full-time *tehsil* organizer in Lakhimpur district, north-western Oudh; in 1945 he was made joint provincial organizer for the whole of the United Provinces; and in 1947 he established a publishing concern in Lucknow, the Rashtra Dharma Prakashan, which issued the Hindi journals *Rashtra Dharma* (monthly), *Panchajanya* (weekly), and *Swadesh* (daily).[5] Other important organizers from the RSS were Sundar Singh Bhandari in Rajasthan, Kushabhau Thakre in Madhya Bharat, Jagannathrao Joshi in the Karnataka region, and Kunj Bihari Lal Rathi and Nana Deshmukh, who were with Upadhyaya in Uttar Pradesh.

Although he was by no means an ideal champion for the principle that the Jana Sangh should become an open party with essentially democratic methods of operation, Sharma was identified

[5] See Sudhakar Raje (ed.), *Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya: A Profile* (New Delhi, 1972), pp. 1–14. Upadhyaya, *Political Diary* (Bombay, 1968), pp. xi–xiv; *Organiser*, 10 December 1967, p. 3 and *The Times of India Directory and Year Book including Who's Who 1958–9*, Bombay, p. 1239. See also *Organiser*, August 1956 (Special issue), p. 26; 25 February 1968, p. 3 (article by Bhaurao Deoras); 31 March 1968, p. 5 (article by Sri Chand Goel).

with that position whereas the RSS and its supporters within the party stood for closure, secrecy, and discipline. The first confrontation between the two sides occurred behind the scenes at the time of the party's second plenary session at Bombay in January 1954, which offered Sharma his first opportunity to win the full presidency of the party and influence the crucial appointments to its Central Working Committee. His nomination was supported by the state working committees of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Vindhya Pradesh, and West Bengal but a candidate favoured by the RSS, Umashankar Mulshankar Trivedi, the party's treasurer, was put forward by the working committees of Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat (his home state), Madhya Pradesh, and PEPSU.[6] Sharma then came under pressure to withdraw his candidature; he revealed much later that Upadhyaya had met him on a train journey and had urged him to issue a statement announcing that he was unwilling to accept the presidency. Knowing that Upadhyaya was Golwalkar's 'right hand', Sharma realized that he was out of favour with the RSS but nevertheless refused to stand down.[7] Other accounts also mention the RSS preference for Trivedi, but he himself evidently took the view that Sharma was entitled to at least one complete year as president[8] and in the end he withdrew his nomination, thus allowing Sharma to be elected unopposed. According to Keshav Dev Verma, Sharma was told when he arrived in Bombay for the plenary session that the RSS headquarters at Nagpur had decided in favour of another person for the presidency, but when some party leaders threatened to take the matter to the open meeting of delegates his appointment was secured.[9]

During the Bombay session, which lasted from 24 to 26 January 1954, Sharma soon found himself in conflict with the RSS element in the party over the choice of the thirty or so members of the new Central Working Committee. His intention had been to appoint between five and seven members whom he personally favoured and to take advice about the remainder, but the RSS leaders gave him a complete list of thirty names produced after consultation amongst themselves.

[6] *Organiser*, 25 January 1954, p. 1.
[7] Sharma interview, 1974, pp. 220–2
[8] Varshney, *Jana Sangh—RSS and Balraj Madhok*, op. cit., pp. 10–11.
[9] *The Statesman*, Delhi, 3 June 1956, p. 4.

By this stage the conflict had spread to issues of policy and these were taken up at a meeting of the party's Central General Council at Indore on 21–3 August. Sharma was unable to attend because his wife was ill, but he prepared an address which was read to the delegates in his absence. In it he warned 'that they must guard against being deflected from the two basic principles of the Jana Sangh as laid down in its constitution, namely, "secular nationalism and unflinching faith in democracy,"' and he went so far as to express approval of certain aspects of Nehru government's domestic and foreign policies.[10] Organizational issues were also raised, and one of the secretaries of the Punjab unit brought forward a resolution condemning the interference of the RSS in the party's affairs, with the result that it was agreed that a further session of the council should be held to discuss the matter in greater detail.[11]

In his 1974 interview, Sharma recalled the fuss which his presidential speech had caused at the Indore session and the accusation that he had been too uncritical of the government. At a chance meeting with Golwalkar in Delhi shortly afterwards, he had tried to clear the air, but found Golwalkar very reserved. Aware that the RSS element within the party was not well disposed towards him, he discussed with Eknath Ranade, a prominent RSS leader, the possibility of resigning, but Ranade advised him to bear with things for the remaining two or three months of his term of office.[12] When Sharma pressed for a further session of the Central General Council to be held on the weekend of 6–7 November to discuss the issue of RSS interference, Upadhyaya insisted that the matter be referred to a meeting of the Central Working Committee which had been set for 7–8 November. He justified his action on the grounds that the dates suggested by Sharma would conflict with those of various provincial conferences, and that the right to convene a meeting of the Central General Council belonged constitutionally not to the president but to the Working Committee.[13] Sharma's response was to resign,

[10] Statement by Sharma, *The Statesman* (Delhi), 4 November 1954, p. 12. See also Sharma interview, 1974, p. 225

[11] According to Sharma, *The Statesman*, Delhi, 8 November 1954, p. 1.

[12] Sharma interview, 1974, pp. 225–7.

[13] There are minor differences between the various accounts of why a second meeting of the Central General Council was not held and why the request to call one was referred to the Central Working Committee. In his

not only as president but also as a member of the party, and on 3 November he issued the following statement:

> Acute differences of opinion on the question of interference by the RSS in its affairs of the Jana Sangh have been growing for over a year. Many RSS workers have entered the party since its inception. They were welcomed, as RSS leaders had publically declared that it was a purely cultural body having nothing to do with politics and that its members were perfectly free to join any political party. In practice, however, it did not prove to be so[.]
>
> The late Dr Mookerjee was often seriously perturbed by the demands of RSS leaders for a decisive role in matters like the appointment of office-bearers, nomination of candidates for elections and matters of policy. We however hoped that the rank and file of the RSS would be drawn out into the arena of democratic public life through their association with the Jana Sangh.
>
> A vigorous and calculated drive was launched to turn the Jana Sangh into a convenient handle of the RSS. Orders were issued from their headquarters through their emissaries and the Jana Sangh was expected to carry them out. Many workers and groups all over the country resented this and the Delhi State Jana Sangh as a body refused to comply.[14]

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statement of 3 November, Sharma said that Upadhyaya had agreed to call a Central General Council meeting on 6–7 November; that the office had been ordered to issue the notice; and that, apparently, 'after consultation with the powers which control their decision', Upadhyaya had refused to call the session (*The Statesman*, Delhi, 4 November 1954, p. 12). Upadhyaya's statement acknowledged that Sharma had requested a meeting of the Central General Council, but he justified referring the request to the Central Working Committee meeting on the grounds already cited (*Organiser*, 8 November 1954, p. 3; see also *The Statesman*, Delhi, 5 November 1954, p. 1). In an interview on 7 November, Sharma is reported to have said that he tried to persuade the Working Committee to call a session of the Central Council but that the committee, 'dominated by RSS elements, refused to do so despite my repeated reminders' (ibid., 8 November 1954, p. 1). However, I have found no reference to a formal meeting of the Central Working Committee between that which preceded the meeting of the Central General Council in August and that of 7–8 November; Sharma was probably using the term 'working committee' to refer to those members of the committee who kept in touch with each other between formal meetings, and thus constituted an informal executive group.

[14] Statement by Sharma in *The Statesman*, Delhi, 4 November 1954, pp. 1 and 2. He had told a reporter on 1 November that he was considering resignation (ibid., 2 November 1954, pp. 1 and 7).

Sharma said after the event that he had hoped that the Central Working Committee 'would be compelled to call a session of the Pratinidhi Sabha [General Council] when I resigned, as it alone could constitutionally accept my resignation'.[15] As it was, when the committee met on 7 November it simply accepted his resignation and appointed Bapu Saheb Sohni, a lawyer from Berar with an RSS background, to serve as acting president.[16] Two secretaries of the Punjab unit, who complained that the committee did not have the right to accept the resignation of the president, demanded an emergency session of the General Council,[17] but without success. For its part, the Working Committee condemned what it described as Sharma's attempt 'to abuse the Jana Sangh forum to try to run down the RSS' and questioned his motives for resigning, claiming that his action was 'undemocratic and unfair to the members of this committee who have not been given the opportunity to discuss the reasons that have impelled him to resign'.[18] It went on to imply that it was Sharma himself who was the offender:

> As a democratic organization it [the Jana Sangh] refuse to suffer dictation even from its president...The Committee assures the people of Bharat that Jana Sangh has come into being under the inspiration of the real democrat and nationalist, Dr Mookerji and will ever function as a dynamic democratic party to serve the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Bharat.[19]

The essential clash in 1954 was between the young RSS organizers, intent upon making the Jana Sangh more centralized and more disciplined, and Sharma's relatively weak group of secondary leaders, trying ineffectually to defend what remained of Mookerjee's project for an open and democratic party. Sharma's various initiatives indicated an intention to extend the executive range of the presidency, especially in the field of party finance and policy making, to influence the composition of the core-group on the Central Working Committee, and to use the Central General Council as the main sounding board; on the other hand, the Nagpur-based RSS

[15] *The Statesman*, Delhi, 8 November 1954, p. 1.

[16] *Organiser*, 15 November 1954, p. 3; *The Statesman*, Delhi, 8 November 1954, pp. 1 and 10.

[17] *The Times of India*, Delhi, 9 November 1954, p. 3.

[18] *The Statesman*, Delhi, 8 November 1954, pp. 1 and 10.

[19] Cited by Jagdish Prasad Mathur, 'The Jana Sangh Marches Ahead', *Organiser*, 26 January 1962, p. 26. This resolution is not given in *BJS Documents*.

executive appears to have favoured a restricted role for the presidency and more powers for the principal secretaries and organizers within the Jana Sangh's hierarchy, with the Central Working Committee, the Central General Council, and the annual plenary session performing a rallying and confirming function where policy matters were concerned. Allied to this disagreement about means there was a much more important disagreement about ends: Sharma, albeit less effectively, did personify the outlook which Mookerjee had represented, an outlook which assumed that the Congress could be challenged by a party which was open and accessible to middle-class politicians and which was willing to combine a controlled form of Hindu nationalism with economic and social liberalism; the RSS hierarchy, on the other hand, held the belief that the party's best chance for power lay in the distant rather than the immediate future, and that priority must be given to assembling and integrating a younger leadership which could represent an emerging middle class educated in Hindi rather than English, and traditional rather than western in its social customs and beliefs.

Under Mookerjee's leadership, the Jana Sangh had remained in touch with the main currents of liberal opinion, but henceforward it would be much more closely identified with the severe Hindu nationalism of the RSS. In the process, it would become more defensive, more provincial, and more responsive to the attitudes of the lower middle classes of the northern towns and cities.

The Central Leadership of the Jana Sangh, 1955–62

Within a few months of Sharma's resignation, it became clear that the power relations within the leadership hierarchy of the Jana Sangh had settled into a new pattern. Under Upadhyaya, who quickly established himself as the figure of most consequence at the central level, the post of general secretary became much more important than that of president, while in terms of institutions, the Central Working Committee became stronger in relation to the Central General Council and, at the informal level, the network of RSS workers was built more firmly than before into the structure of the party. As a result, the lines of communication and command now passed without a break through a chain of full-time

organizing secretaries, who worked with the same self-discipline as their counterparts within the RSS itself. On the other hand, the party's state and national presidents were expected to accept limited and largely honorific roles, and Jana Sangh members of the central parliament and state legislatures were firmly controlled by the party organization.

Upadhyaya proved to be an astute and capable administrator. He took an increasing interest in the discussion of the policy and party doctrine, and toured widely within India, thereby acquiring a detailed knowledge of the party's various state units. He became, in effect, the party's principal spokesman, and thus assumed a role which had earlier been exercised first by Mookerjee and later by Sharma as party president. The need for support was obvious: it would not have been possible for Upadhyaya to remain both a *de facto* head of the party and a general secretary, and he therefore appointed two assistant secretaries to help him. Of these, Atal Behari Vajpayee came from Uttar Pradesh and was well placed to cover the party's northern units, while Jagannathrao Joshi, from Mysore, took responsibility for the southern units.

By the time the Jana Sangh entered the campaign for the third general elections in 1962, its earlier isolation had been reduced to some extent; the newly formed Swatantra Party and some of the other non-Congress parties were treating it with cautious respect. Although it again concentrated on the northern states, it nevertheless succeeded in increasing its representation in the Lok Sabha and in the Legislative Assemblies. It had become a force to be reckoned with, especially in any moves to replace the Congress government at the Centre by a broad centre–right coalition.

The Formal and Informal Structure of the Jana Sangh

Thus far we have considered the structure of the early Jana Sangh mainly with reference to power relations within the party's central institutions, but to obtain a complete picture of its organizational arrangements we need to take stock of those provisions of its constitution which affected state and local, as well as national, institutions. Assuming that the party had settled down by the early 1960s following the changes set in motion by the 1954 succession crisis, we can take the constitution and rules as amended to 1963

as providing a convenient picture of the party's more mature organization. The framework at the time was as given in the following chart.[20]

Chart 5.1

Level	Plenary bodies	Executive bodies
1 Locality (gram panchayat or municipal ward)	Sthaniya Samiti (Local Committee)	Karya Samiti (Local Working Committee)
2 Development Block		Mandal Samiti (Mandal Committee)
3 District		Zila Samiti (District Committee)
4 State	(i) Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha (State General Council) (ii) Pradeshik Sammelan (State Plenary Session)	(i) Pradeshik Karya Samiti (State Working Commission) (ii) Pradeshik Sansadiya Adhikaran (State Parliamentary Board)
5 Regional	Anchalik Sammelan (Regional Plenary Session)	
6 National	(i) Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (Central General Council) (ii) Sarvadeshik Sammelan (National Plenary Session)	Bharatiya Karya (Central Working Committee) Kendriya Sansadiya Adhikaran (Central Parliamentary Board)

Note: The English terms given in brackets are not always strict translations of the Hindi equivalents but they correspond to usage in the Jana Sangh publications in English.

[20] *Bharatiya Jana Sangh: Constitution and Rules* (Bharatiya Jana Sangh, New Delhi, n.d.), as amended by the eleventh annual session, Ahmedabad, December 1963, Cf. *Bharatiya Jana Sangh: Constitution and Rules (1960)* (Bharatiya Jana Sangh, New Delhi, n.d.), as amended by the seventh annual session, Bangalore, December 1958. Both texts are in Hindi. For an excellent survey of the 1963 constitution and rules, see Motilal A. Jhangiani, *Jana Sangh and Swatantra: A Profile of the Rightist Parties in India* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 28–43.

Theoretically, this structure was created from the base upwards by a process of annual organizational elections and by a parallel process of membership co-option and appointment by executive officers. Once members within each local area had elected a Working Committee, all the members of the Local Working Committees in each Mandal area elected the officers of a Mandal Committee, whose president was authorized to appoint additional members. Subsequently, all the elected members of the Mandal Committees elected the officers of the District Committee, to which further members could be appointed by the district president. Next, to provide the core membership of the State General Council, the elected members of the Mandal Committees within each district of the state chose one member for each Legislative Assembly constituency and one woman member for each district, and at their first meeting these members then elected the officers of the State Working Committee. The Council membership was augmented by the addition of various co-opted and nominated members, including Jana Sanghis who were members of the state legislatures or presidents of Zila Parishads (District Councils), or chairmen of municipalities with populations of more than 20,000, and the state president was authorized to make nominations to his State Working Committee, the size of which was limited to 31 members.

At the national level, the core membership of the Central General Council consisted of the presidents and secretaries of the District Committees with additional representatives from districts containing more than two Lok Sabha constituencies. To this core were added the members of the Central Working Committee and the State Working Committees; representatives of front organizations nominated by the Central Working Committee; representatives of affiliated associations; all Jana Sangh members of the central parliament; and not more than 20 members to be co-opted at the first meeting of the Council. The national president of the party was chosen by a postal ballot of the core members of the Central General Council and it was his responsibility to nominate the members of the Central Working Committee, which could number no more than 31 members; from these members he then appointed two vice-presidents, a general secretary, one or more secretaries and a treasurer. The Central Working Committee was authorized to establish a Central Parliamentary Board, whose

function was to direct the work of the State Parliamentary Boards appointed by the State Working Committees.

A striking feature of these arrangements was the scope which the state and national presidents were given to choose the members of their working committees and the exceptional right given to the national president to choose the officers as well as the members of the Central Working Committee. There was, as we have seen, provision for a sequence of organizational elections culminating in the choice of the core memberships of the State and Central General Councils, but the considerable numbers of co-opted and nominated members on these bodies could serve as counterweights to the elected element. The provision for the election of the national president could in theory have stimulated processes of democratic choice within the party but in fact every president was elected to office unopposed. In effect, the chain of plenary institutions in this framework was not a strong one and the main lines of control were provided through the hierarchy of working committees, where the basic decisions regarding policy and strategy were resolved.

Although the 1963 party constitution contained no articles defining the membership and purposes of the general meetings of delegates, notables, and leaders which are described as 'sessions' in the language of Indian party politics. Rule 4 did specify how state regional, and national sessions were to be arranged. As far as national and regional sessions were concerned, the Central Working Committee was authorized to arrange in gatherings attended not only by regular members of the Central General Council but also by members of the State General Councils, Jana Sangh members of the central parliament and of the state legislatures, and other specially appointed delegates. The first national session was held at Kanpur on 29–31 December 1952 and set the pattern for subsequent occasions. Before each such session the Central Working Committee would meet to prepare resolutions and to settle the schedule of business. The session itself would begin with the formal address of the newly elected national president, after which two or three days would be spent in discussion of policy resolutions, which were duly reported in the national press. These national sessions were festive occasions when the party was on show to the public. The general discussions were usually held in a large tent (or *pandal*) containing a raised platform on which

party leaders would sit during proceedings, and there would be smaller tents and temporary buildings in the vicinity to serve as offices, canteens, exhibition centres, and as venues for the sectional conferences which were sometimes held in conjunction with the main one. Shortly after the end of the session the national president would announce the membership of the incoming Central Working Committee, which met every three months or so, sometimes in Delhi and sometimes in a state capital. The Central General Council would also meet from time to time, and in the well-established state units of the party a similar cycle of meetings would take place, culminating in a plenary session at which policy resolutions would be passed and officers elected for the year ahead.

However, to understand how these processes were sustained and regulated, we need to analyse the informal power relations which lay behind the formal framework. The most important element in this power structure was the central secretariat which had developed under Upadhyaya's control. As we have seen, he at first established a pattern of two secretaries, with Vajpayee and Jagannathrao Joshi as the initial incumbents, but by March 1958 further appointments had produced a system under which individual secretaries were assigned responsibilities for particular parts of India. Within the boundaries established by the reorganization of state effected in 1956, Joshi was placed in charge of the southern zone, which comprised the Maharashtra region of Bombay state, Mysore, Kerala, Madras, Andhra Pradesh, and the former French territories; Balraj Madhok was entrusted with the northern zone, consisting of the Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir areas; Nana Deshmukh was given the eastern zone, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, and Tripura; and Sundar Singh Bhandari was allotted the western zone, enclosing the areas of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and the Gujarat region of Bombay state.[21]

All of these men shared an RSS background and each had special qualifications for his regional responsibility. We have already noted

[21] For an excellent account of these arrangements, see Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh*, op. cit., pp. 182–4. For a report of a meeting of the four zonal secretaries, along with Upadhyaya and Vajpayee, see *Organiser*, 17 March 1958, p. 4. See also H. T. Davey, 'A Case Study of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh', pp. 175–82.

Joshi's connection with Karnataka, and this made him a natural choice for the southern region. In the same way, Madhok's knowledge of Delhi and Punjabi affairs, and his understanding of the Arya Samaj and its concerns, made him the obvious candidate for the northern post. His father had been an official employed by the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, and Balraj was born on 25 February 1920 in Skardu, then the winter capital of Ladakh. In 1938 he joined the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic (DAV) College in Lahore and became a member of the RSS. Having obtained his MA degree in 1942, he was appointed to the staff of the Srinagar DAV College in 1944, and became its vice-principal in the following year. After serving as provincial organizer of the RSS in Jammu and Kashmir from 1942 to 1947, and taking part in the defence of Srinagar against the tribal invaders in 1947, he helped to form the Jammu Praja Parishad and became its general secretary. Sent away from the state in January 1948 by Sheikh Abdullah's government, he had gone to Delhi and in 1950 joined the teaching staff at Camp College, which drew students from the Punjabi refugee colonies of the capital. There he was closely involved in the formation of the Jana Sangh unit for the 'greater Punjab' region, becoming its first general secretary, and later, after the 1954 succession crisis, the president of the party's Delhi unit.[22]

Within the eastern region, the base area was the state of Uttar Pradesh, where Nana Deshmukh had been the key party figure in the mid-1950s. Born in 1917 in the Marathwada region of what was then the princely state of Hyderabad, he had been attracted to the RSS in 1933 or 1934; in 1940 he had become the RSS organizer in charge of the north-eastern part of the United Provinces and it was then that he met Upadhyaya, with whom he worked after the war in the Rashtra Dharma Prakashan in Lucknow. When Upadhyaya was made general secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Jana Sangh in September 1951 Deshmukh was appointed organizing secretary of the unit, and in 1956 he became

[22] From a biography in *Organiser*, 13 March 1966, p. 3. See also ibid., August 1956 (Special issue), p. 32; 27 May 1963, pp. 4 and 14; a press conference by Madhok on 12 February 1973 (*The Times of India*, Delhi, 13 February 1973, pp. 1 and 10), and letter from Madhok to L. K. Advani, 7 March 1973, in Manga Ram Varshney, *Jana Sangh—RSS and Balraj Madhok*, pp. 135–64.

its general secretary.[23] In the western zone, Bhandari had an equally close association with Rajasthan; he had been born in 1921 at Udaipur, in south-eastern Rajputana, and had attended Colvin High School at Sirohi and Maharana Bhupal College at Udaipur before completing his education at Kanpur, first at the Sanatana Dharma College and then at the DAV College. After a period as an advocate at the Mewar High Court and as a headmaster of school at Udaipur, he had become an RSS organizer in 1946 and later served as secretary of the Rajasthan Jana Sangh from 1951 to 1958.[24]

As at the Centre, so within the established state units an active secretary, usually with an RSS background, provided the core of executive organization. Such men were the fixed points in the middle levels of the party hierarchy, and around them were built the networks of special officers known as 'organizing secretaries' (*sangathan mantris*). These were mainly appointed to serve at the local and district levels, but the Uttar Pradesh unit also placed them in charge of divisions, composed of groups of districts.[25] Normally, organizing secretaries were responsible to a state general secretary and through him to the appropriate zonal secretary and to the general secretary at the Centre, but they were sometimes given added responsibilities.

In effect, the combination of the system of zonal secretaries at the Centre with that of organizing secretaries at the state and lower levels provided the central leadership with an unobtrusive but powerful means of regulating the party's activities. The system was

[23] Interview with Nana Deshmukh, New Delhi, 14 May 1984. See also S. S. Bhandari (ed.) *Jana-Deep Souvenir: A Publication Brought Out on the Occasion of the 14th Annual Session of Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Calicut, December 1967*, p. 106. Deshmukh refers to his association with Upadhyaya in his foreword to Sudhakar Raje (ed.), *Deendayal Upadhyaya*, op. cit., p. i.

[24] Government of India, Rajya Sabha Secretariat, *Parliament of India: Rajya Sabha: Who's Who 1970* (New Delhi, 1970), pp. 35–6.

[25] For an account of the system of organizing secretaries in the UP Jana Sangh in the late 1960s, see Saraswati Srivastava, 'Uttar Pradesh: Politics of Neglected Development', in Iqbal Narain (ed.), *State Politics in India* (Meerut, 1976), pp. 356–7. In Madhya Pradesh the Jana Sangh provided for seven divisional units, see B. R. Purohit, 'Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the Fourth General Elections in Madhya Pradesh', *Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, July–September 1968, p. 49.

very much modelled on the organization of the RSS, and it is not hard to see how the formal procedures of the Jana Sangh would be confined and weakened by it. Writing in 1973, Balraj Madhok was to complain that

> the organizing secretaries who happen to be the real power in the Jana Sangh, having been conversant only with the working system of the RSS want to run Jana Sangh on the same lines. They have nothing but, contempt for democratic forms, norms, and conventions. Dissent of any kind is anathema to them. They want to suppress all dissidents in the name of discipline. They are interested more in control than in growth of the party. That is the real problem and dilemma of Jana Sangh which will have to be resolved one day. The sooner it is resolved the better it would be for the RSS, the Jana Sangh and the country.[26]

Madhok expressed these views at a time when he was in conflict with the party leadership, but his judgement on how the system of organizing secretaries had worked in the party's early days is striking and revealing.

To a large extent, the control exercised by the hierarchy of secretaries was masked from the public by the screen of eminent men who were appointed to serve as presidents at the national and state levels of the party. Generally of an older generation than the secretaries, their status was similar to that of the *sanghchalaks* within the RSS, that is, they were accorded a great deal of honour and esteem but were not given much power within the organization: they were expected to tour the country making speeches to explain the party's policies but were not encouraged to play an active administrative role. Many of them had been prominent in the Hindu nationalist politics of the inter-war period through association with such bodies as the Arya Samaj, the Sanatana Dharma Sabha and the Hindu Mahasabha, and they thus helped to convey the impression that the Jana Sangh formed part of an established political tradition and was not simply a creation of the early 1950s. The national presidents of the late 1950s and early 1960s conformed to this pattern: Prem Nath Dogra, who held the office from December 1954 to April 1956 was followed by Deva Prasad Ghosh, a distinguished academic from Bengal, who had belonged to the Hindu Mahasabha in the late 1930s, and he

[26] Letter from Madhok to Lal Kishinchand Advani, 7 March 1973, in Varshney, *Jana Sangh—RSS and Balraj Madhok*, op. cit., pp. 158–9.

was succeeded in January 1960 by Pitamber Das, a High Court lawyer from Uttar Pradesh, who in turn gave way in 1961 to Avasaralu Rama Rao, an experienced lawyer from Andhra Pradesh.[27] Although all these men were respected elders who were above the fray and made no attempt to assert themselves as Mauli Chandra Sharma had done in 1954, they were of importance to the party's public reputation. In the same way, although real power lay with the party organizers and the secretariat, the Jana Sangh's Congress-type framework of large executive bodies (the central and state working committees) and their associated plenary institutions provided it with the appearance—and to some extent the promise—of open and democratic politics in the conduct of its affairs; it enabled the party to demonstrate that its delegate sessions were significant events in the formulation of its policies and that its membership was both numerous and active.

In fact, although the distinction was not clearly stated, the party's 1963 constitution provided for two categories of members, the first consisting of people aged 18 years or over who were willing to pay an annual fee of 25 *paise* and subscribe to the party's aims and the second of those who had served actively for one year on an executive or plenary body or on a front organization of the party. The first category of ordinary members was entitled to participate in the election of members of the working committees of local units but the 'active' members were eligible for appointment to the bodies above that level.

Providing that these distinctions are taken into account, the general trends in the membership and local committee strength of the party can be traced with some degree of confidence. The earliest measure is provided by figures published in February 1954, when the party was credited with more than 143,000 members and 2000 local committees in the better organized states,[28] but it was only

[27] For biographies of Deva Prasad Ghose, see *Organiser*, 30 April 1956, pp. 8 and 14; 24 June 1963, p. 7; *The Times of India Directory and Year Book 1958–9*, pp. 1162; Hari Sharma Chhabra (ed.), *Opposition in the Parliament: A Unique Authentic and Comprehensive Biographical Dictionary of MPs on Opposition Benches* (Delhi, 1952), p. 156; of Pitamber Das, see Government of India, Rajya Sabha Secretariat, *Parliament of India: Rajya Sabha: Who's Who 1970*, pp. 214–15; *Organiser*, 1 February 1960, p. 1; and of Avasaralu Rama Rao, see ibid., 21 November 1960, p. 3.

[28] *Organiser*, 8 February 1954, p. 1.

in the late 1950s that more systematic information became available in the general secretary's reports. Table 5.1 gives the data covering the years from 1957 to 1960.[29]

TABLE 5.1: Bharatiya Jana Sangh: National Membership and Committee Total, 1957–60

Year	Members	Local committees	Mandal committees
1957	74,863	889	243
1958	209,702	1787	455
1959	215,370	2551	495
1960	274,907	4313	584

Notes: (1) The figures for 1957 do not include data for the Punjab, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala.

(2) The figure for 1958 do not include the local committees in West Bengal, Bihar, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh, and some mandal committees in Delhi, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh.

During the following year, 1960, the number of local committees jumped from 2551 to 4313, an increase which the general secretary attributed 'to the fact that in areas selected for intensive work, an attempt to reach as many polling stations as possible has been made',[30] and although the figure for 1961 is not known, the fact that the party's total membership reached a peak of 597,041 at the end of the year[31] would indicate a substantial increase in its size.

The evidence regarding membership and local unit strengths at the state level is fragmentary, but there are indications that the party's coverage of territory was far from uniform. The data in Table 5.2[32] give some impression of the extent to which this was so.

[29] See the general secretary's reports for 1959 and 1960 in ibid., 1 February 1960, p. 9; 2 January 1961, p. 9. See also the reports for 1957 and 1958 (ibid., 14 April 1958, p. 9; 12 January 1959, p. 8). The figures for 1959 are the relatively complete ones cited in the report for 1960, and not the provisional ones given in the report for 1959, which did not include data for Karnataka and Gujarat.

[30] Ibid., 2 January 1961, p. 9.

[31] *National Herald*, Lucknow, 1 February 1967, p. 4.

[32] UP figures are from the UP General Secretary's report for 1958. See *Organiser* 16 March 1959, p. 17. The figure for other units are from ibid.,

TABLE 5.2: Bharatiya Jana Sangh: State Membership and Committee Totals, 1958–60

State units	Members	Local committees	Mandal committees	Legislative Assembly constituencies[a]
Uttar Pradesh (1958)	43,107	882	91	341 (430)
Madhya Pradesh (1960)	23,000	500	49	218 (288)
Punjab (1960)	45,000	292	39	121 (154)
Maharashtra (1960)	45,000	525	64	221 (264)
Delhi (1960)	19,000	170	30	

[a] A proportion of the constituencies under the 1956 delimitation were double-member and the number of seats is given in brackets for each state.

It is even more difficult to gauge the extent to which the Jana Sangh relied upon RSS workers to supply the core of its party activists. Press reports of RSS involvement in the party are numerous, but precise measures are few. Referring to the events of 1954, Mauli Chandra Sharma estimated that there were 500 to 700 workers amongst the 13,000 members of the Delhi unit of the Jana Sangh at that time[33] and this strengthens the impression that the RSS tended to supply a minority, although an extremely important one, of the party's local activists, just as RSS organizers constituted the most energetic and disciplined element within the organizational framework proper.

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2 January 1961, pp. 7, 8, 14, and 17. There are scattered figures for the membership and committee strengths of some state units in ibid., August 1956 (Special issue), pp. 35–50.

[33] Sharma interview, 1974, p. 226. In another interview (8 July 1974), Sharma referring generally to this period, placed the number of RSS members at 1200 in a total membership of 13,000; Geeta Puri, *Bharatiya Jana Sangh*, op. cit., p. 48.

As noted above, membership tended to fall off after an election campaign, and we find the Central Working Committee in 1962 proposing that an effort should be made to increase the total membership from 300,000 to 500,000, which suggests that about half of the pre-election membership (597,041 at the end of 1961) had evaporated by that stage.[34] There must have been some recovery in the succeeding years, because in April 1966 the general secretary was claiming that the total had risen from 600,000 to 1,300,000 within the space of a year. In the same report, he also pointed out that the party had achieved a significant measure of coverage, having established branches and district committees in 268 and 201 districts, respectively, of India's 350 administrative districts.[35]

Behind these patterns of membership lies the history of the party's efforts to lodge itself in as many regions as possible during the 1950s. Its base area was the north, where its units were securely established from 1951 onwards in every territory except Jammu and Kashmir; there it left the field to the Praja Parishad, which it accepted as an affiliate at the end of 1954 and finally absorbed in December 1963.[36] In western and eastern India the party's main units were formed in 1951 in Gujarat, Bihar, and West Bengal and in 1952 in Maharashtra, but permanent units were not established until 1963 in Assam and Orissa. However, the extension of its organization in the southern states was hampered by its claim that Hindi should become the language for 'all the official purposes of the Union', which clashed with the strong southern preference for English. In addition, the Jana Sangh's fierce criticism of Pakistan, which attracted support in the north, aroused little enthusiasm in the south, where the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 had not created lasting bitterness. Although the Karnataka (later Mysore) unit of the party was formed in September 1951 and a unit was set up in Andhra Pradesh in December 1954, properly constituted Kerala and Tamil Nadu

[34] *Pioneer*, Lucknow, 19 March 1962, p. 6. The membership drive was to be completed by 1 September 1962, after which mandal and state units were to be constituted, and the election of the national president completed by 1 Dcember 1962.

[35] *Organiser*, 8 May 1966, p. 7. The membership total at the end of 1966 was given as 1,257,000; see *National Herald*, 1 February 1967, p. 4.

[36] *Organiser*, 23 September 1963, pp. 13 and 14.

units were not formed until 21 September and 3 October 1958 respectively.[37]

One of the party's real problems in establishing itself outside the Hindi heartland was its lack of financial resources on the scale of those available to its rivals, particularly the Congress party. Its income was derived from such sources as donations, membership fees, purse collections, monthly payments by party members, the sale of party literature, and monthly contributions from Jana Sangh members of Parliament and the state legislatures.[38] Writing after the 1962 election campaign, Madhok said that his party 'never expected any financial assistance from the big industrial and commercial houses' but that 'it banked on the support of the lower middle class and the small trader to meet the minimum local election expenses'.[39] Such people generally made anonymous contributions to local collections, known as 'purses', which were presented to party leaders on tour; for example, a report on fund-raising in Uttar Pradesh in 1965 mentioned total receipts of Rs 372,501[40] and purses in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra at the time of the 1967 election campaign produced the sum of Rs 285,000.[41] Revenue from fees would have contributed a useful sum; with a minimum membership fee of 25 *paise* per annum, the record membership of 1,300,000 in 1966 should have brought the party Rs 325,000, and candidates in Uttar Pradesh

[37] On the formation of the Tamil Nadu unit, see ibid., 15 September 1958, p. 3; 13 October 1958 p. 4; 24 October 1960, p. 4. The dates for the formation of the party's state units are given in Appendix D in *BJS Documents*, V., p. 180. See also Jagdish Prasad Mathur, 'The Jana Sangh Marches Ahead', *Organiser*, 26 January 1962, pp. 19 and 26.

[38] Motilal A. Jhangiani, *Jana Sangh and Swatantra*, op. cit., p. 39. For a comparative study of the finances of Indian political parties, see A. H. Somjee and G. Somjee. 'India', *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 25, 1963, pp. 686–702. See also A. H. Somjee, 'Party Finance', in *Seminar*, New Delhi, no. 74, *Money in Politics*, October 1965, pp. 15–18.

[39] Balraj Madhok, 'Jana Sangh', in *Seminar*, no. 34, *Election Analysis*, June 1962, p. 3.

[40] Special correspondent, Lucknow, 15 June 1965 (*Organiser*, 27 June 1965, p. 1). The amounts presented were Rs 295,000 to the national president, Bachhraj Vyas; Rs 41,000 to Upadhyaya; Rs 25,000 to the state president Ganga Ram Talwar; and Rs 11,501 to Vajpayee.

[41] Ibid., 29 January 1967, p. 2.

were charged nomination fees of Rs 150 for a Legislative Assembly constituency and Rs 200 for a Lok Sabha constituency at this time. Such amounts sound substantial until it is remembered that the cost of the party's campaign in Uttar Pradesh alone in the 1967 elections was estimated as being Rs 5,000,000,[42] and that the party would have received far less in purses and in membership fees in other areas where it was struggling to establish itself. As Madhok had said, the party did not expect to attract money from business organizations and the fact that funds flowing to it from such a source were far smaller than those received by the Congress or even the Swatantra Party can be gauged from records showing donations by joint stock companies to political parties in the 1960s; in the period from mid-1961 to 15 September 1964, the Jana Sangh received Rs 3425 compared with Rs 9,813,180 received by the Congress and Rs 1,565,003 received by the Swatantra Party[43] and in the accounting periods ending 31 December 1966 and 31 March 1967, the Jana Sangh received a total of Rs 10,051, the Congress Rs 1,589,764, and the Swatantra Party Rs 463,156.[44] It is very difficult to obtain accurate information about the sources of party funds in India and such information as does become available often does so during internal disputes and must therefore be treated with caution. However, from the evidence given by Mauli Chandra Sharma in his 1974 interview, it would seem that lack of funds was a real source of concern for the Jana Sangh in its early years and

[42] Report of an interview with Ram Prakash Gupta, the convenor of the parliamentary board of the UP Jana Sangh, 30 August 1966, see *National Herald*, 31 August 1999, p. 3.

[43] P.D., L.S. (Third Series), XXXVIII, no. 17, February 1965, cc. 26–7. See also *The Statesman* Delhi, 18 February 1965, p. 1. Under Company Law a joint stock company had to record political donations on its balance sheet for submission to the Registrars of Companies.

[44] See Annexure No. 22 in Part 1 of Appendix LXII, pp. 77–80, in *P.D., R.S., Sixty-Second Session* (1967), *Appendices.* This source lists the names of the contributing companies and the size of their contributions. Only three firms contributed to the Jana Sangh. The Congress and Swatantra totals (Rs 1,589, 764.45 and Rs 463,156 respectively) were recalculated from the lists of individual contributions.

The returns are those filed with the Registrars of Companies up to 31 August 1967 (see statement by Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Minister of Industrial Development, *P.D., R.S.*, LXII, 23 November 1967, cc. 797–81).

that the RSS had a vested interest in preventing the party from obtaining an independent means of financial support.[45] The difficulty created by the RSS connection is brought out in a story told by Sharma of overtures made to certain Parsi businessmen in Bombay. While they were prepared to consider supplying the Jana Sangh with between ten and twenty lakhs of rupees as funding for a year, they were concerned about the influence of the RSS in its affairs and wanted to know whether, since they were not Hindus, they would be accepted by the party; Sharma was unable to give them an assurance that they would be welcome when he was no longer the president.[46]

By the early 1960, then, we see a party whose formal structure had been warped and distorted by its informal power relations. While the Jana Sangh's constitution and rules, as amended to 1963, still bore a family resemblance to the Congress constitutions of the inter-war period, its informal structure more closely resembled that of the RSS. In other words, the outwardly democratic hierarchy of elected committees and their associated executives was effectively controlled from within by the tight knot of secretaries at the Centre and by the supporting framework of secretaries and organizers at the state and regional levels of the party. This high degree of centralization and control expressed not only a particular theory of party organization but also a distrust of the generation of Indian politicians who were prominent in the 1950s and who were generally English-speaking and anglicized in their outlook, even when they were disposed to give some credence to the doctrines of Hindu nationalism. It was as though Upadhyaya and his group had placed their trust in a new generation of public men and women who had not known the British Raj except as children and as students and who would therefore draw more readily from the inspiration of Hindu culture and Hindu traditions. Put simply, the Jana Sangh had postponed its challenge to the Congress party until such time as the younger leadership, represented by Upadhyaya, Vajpayee, and Madhok, had time to consolidate its position and to define its intellectual objectives

[45] See above.

[46] Sharma interview, 1974, pp. 211–12 Cf. the account of the incident in H. T. Davey,'A Case Study of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh', p. 171 (the reference is to an interview with Sharma in August 1965).

with confidence. By the mid-1960s this period of preparation was coming to an end and the party's new leaders were beginning to assert themselves in the wider political arenas.

Strains in the Jana Sangh Leadership, 1962–7

After China's invasion of India's northern border areas in October 1962 and her unilateral implementation of a cease-fire arrangement in the following month, the Government of India again found itself under heavy fire from the opposition parties, which claimed that the country's defence and foreign policies failed to protect vital national interests. The Jana Sangh formed part of the non-Congress alliance which developed during this crisis and it found a forceful spokesman in Dr Raghuvira, a distinguished Sanskrit scholar and former congressman, who became president of the party in November 1962. He took a leading part in public debates until he was severely injured in a motor accident and died in a Kanpur hospital on 14 May 1963.[47] The party then recalled Deva Prasad Ghosh for a second term as president, but during his period in office, which included the death of Nehru in May 1964 and the succession of Lal Bahadur Shastri to the prime ministership, the main burden of the leadership fell upon Upadhyaya and the central secretaries.

Although among these Upadhyaya remained pre-eminent, his fellow secretaries were also, in varying degrees, gaining experience in parliamentary and public politics and could no longer be ignored when candidates for the party presidency were being considered. Vajpayee had been elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957 and, as the leader of the party's small groups in the central parliament, had proved himself to be an effective speaker, especially in the field of foreign affairs; at the end of 1960 he visited the United States under an Education Exchange Programme and was able to observe the American presidential election campaign which led to the victory of John Kennedy;[48] and although he was defeated in two Lok Sabha

[47] *The Statesman*, Delhi, 15 May 1963, p. 1. On Raghuvir's presidency, see H. T. Davery, ' A Case Study of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh', pp. 189–91.

[48] See *Organiser*, 26 September 1960, p. 2; 14 November 1960, p. 16; Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh*, op. cit., p. 22.

constituencies in the 1962 general elections he was subsequently returned to the Rajya Sabha and was again chosen to lead the party's parliamentary group. Balraj Madhok had also embarked on a parliamentary career; although he failed in a bid to win the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat in the 1957 elections, he was returned from that constituency in a by-election in April 1961 and showed himself to be a resourceful and effective member of the house in the closing Lok Sabha sessions of that year. Had he not lost his seat in the 1962 elections he might well have become the leader of the party's Lok Sabha group.

By contrast, Upadhyaya had devoted himself almost exclusively to his work as general secretary. Although his name had gone forward in the nominations for the national presidency of the party at the end of 1960, he subsequently withdrew it in favour of Rama Rao.[49] Then, in the spring of 1963, he was asked to stand as the Jana Sangh candidate in a parliamentary by-election for the Jaunpur parliamentary seat in Uttar Pradesh; he was at first very reluctant to do so but eventually bowed to pressure within the party.[50] He was defeated, but his candidature at least signified that he was now willing to move outside the strict limits of the role he had set for himself in the mid-1950s. More significant was his interest in revising the party's doctrine; in the 1950s, the nearest approach to a statement of the Jana Sangh's basic philosophy had been the preambles to its successive manifestos, but in 1964 Upadhyaya brought forward an extended text dealing with general policy matters. This was widely discussed at party meetings and finally adopted at the Central General Council meeting at Vijayawada in January 1965 as the *Principles and Policy* document,[51] its central philosophy being characterized by Upadhyaya as that of 'integral humanism'. In a significant assertion of intellectual leadership, which added considerably to

[49] *Organiser*, 21 November 1960, p. 3.

[50] From a reminiscence by Bhaurao Deoras in Sudhakar Raje (ed.), *Deendayal Upadhyaya*, op. cit., p. 102.

[51] See Bharatiya Jana Sangh, *Principles and Policy* [New Delhi, 1965]. For its consideration within the party, see *Organiser*, 24 August 1964, pp. 7 and 10; 14 December 1964, p. 13; 11 January 1965, pp. 2 and 15; 15 February 1965, pp. 5 and 14; *The Statesman*, Delhi, 18 August 1964, p. 7; 7 November 1964, p. 4; 7 December 1964, p. 7; 26 January 1965, p. 12; 28 January 1965, p. 6.

Upadhyaya's status within the party, he expounded its main principles to party and public audiences.[52]

Upadhyaya's name had been mentioned as a possible successor to Deva Prasad Ghosh but in January 1965 the post of party president went to Bachhraj Vyas, who had at one stage served as RSS secretary at Nagpur and had been secretary and later president of the Maharashtra Jana Sangh unit.[53] A retiring man, he later described how Upadhyaya had backed his candidature; he claimed that at the time of the meeting of the Central General Council at Gwalior in August 1964 there had been 'common consent' that Upadhyaya should become president, and that all the 'regional committees' (presumably the state working committees) had sent in resolutions proposing Upadhyaya's name:

> But he was reluctant and proposed my name instead at the annual meeting of the UP delegates. He not only moved the proposal but with his characteristic zeal saw to it that it was accepted and carried through. So I was burdened with the responsibility of this high post....[54]

According to *Link*, a New Delhi weekly, the majority of the party's units had wanted to elect Upadhyaya as president and either Madhok or Vajpayee as general secretary in his place. Golwalkar is then said to have intervened to insist on the choice of Vyas.[55]

As general secretary, Upadhyaya continued to guide the party through the troubled events of 1965. In April of that year fighting broke out between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch and a subsequent cease-fire agreement had no sooner come into effect than the Kashmir dispute flared up again, as armed raiders began crossing into the Vale from Azad Kashmir from about the beginning of August; by September India and Pakistan were embroiled

[52] See Upadhyaya, *Integral Humanism* (New Delhi, n.d.). This brochure contains texts of four lectures given in Poona in April 1965.

[53] *Organiser*, 11 January 1965, p. 2; Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh*, op. cit., pp. 250–1.

[54] From a reminiscence by Vyas see in Sudhakar Raje (ed.), *Deendayal Upadhyaya*, op. cit., p. 144. The meeting referred to is presumably a session of the UP State General Council, although the actual nomination would have been made by the UP State Working Committee.

[55] *Link*, 7 March 1965, p. 13. See also Varshney, *Jana Sangh-RSS and Balraj Madhok*, op. cit., pp. 17–18. Vajpayee described the *Link* report as 'fantastic', *Organiser*, 22 March 1965, see p. 2.

in an open war in the Kashmir and Punjab sectors, but under heavy and concerted international pressure both countries eventually accepted the United Nations Security Council's call for a cease-fire, which came into effect on 23 September. This sequence of crises aroused all the old antagonisms which the Jana Sangh had harboured towards Pakistan, and the party's central bodies adopted resolutions condemning that country's actions, warning, incidentally, that

> There should be no political bargaining with Indian Muslims. They must be guaranteed all constitutional rights due to them in this secular State. But all separatist tendencies and attitudes betraying a pro-Pak bias must be curbed and the outlook of Indian Muslims must be nationalised.[56]

There was a distinct possibility that the Jana Sangh, responding to the more extreme elements amongst its supporters, might now commit itself to the demand that India should broaden the scope of the conflict and aim at the destruction of the Pakistani state, but, even at the height of the September fighting, it did no more than maintain that the Indian army should occupy those parts of Kashmir which were under Pakistani control. Upadhyaya's influence at this time was a moderating one; in his 'Political Diary', he emphasized that India's main objective must be to destroy the Pakistan war-machine rather than undo the partition of the subcontinent. 'Even conceding that partition is responsible for many a problem that we are confronted with', he wrote,

> we are sure that the present confrontation is not meant to annul partition. Unity will come not by war but by a voluntary decision of the people of Pakistan. Once they get disillusioned with their leadership, they would not like to remain apart.[57]

Shortly after the Indo-Pakistani war had ended in a cease-fire, the Soviet Union persuaded both countries to meet for talks at

[56] Central Working Committee, Delhi, 15 August 1965, in Bharatiya Jana Sangh, *Resolution Passed by Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, August 17–18, 1965, and Working Committee on August 15, 1965 & September 27–28, 1965*, pp. 9–12. This resolution is also given in *BJS Documents*, IV, pp. 77–9, but it should be noted that there are some differences in wording between the two texts and that the text in *BJS Documents* is attributed to the Central General Council and is dated 17 August 1965.

[57] *Organiser*, 19 September 1965, pp. 3 and 15. See also his subsequent 'Political Diary' in ibid., 26 September 1965, p. 2.

Tashkent in January 1966. The result was the Tashkent Declaration, signed on 10 January, under which the armed personnel of both sides were to withdraw to the positions held before 5 August 1965. However, the news of the declaration was over-shadowed by the announcement that the Indian prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, had died at Tashkent. Nehru's daughter, Mrs Indira Gandhi, was chosen to take his place but she was left with very little time to rally her government and the Congress party for the fourth general elections, due to take place early in 1967. Preparation for these contests was also a major concern of the Jana Sangh, which decided to break with previous practice and to ask one of the senior secretaries, Balraj Madhok, to be its effective national leader in the forthcoming campaign; his election as the party's president in succession to Bachhraj Vyas was announced on 8 March 1966. According to Madhok's own account, he had first been approached about assuming this responsibility in mid-1965, but had then refused to allow his name to be considered:

> I explained that the organizing secretaries had become accustomed to dummy Presidents and I could not be a dummy. This would lead to friction and tension. The suggestion was repeated a few months later with the plea that party needed a President during the election year who could write and speak in both Hindi and English so that the party could make a show in South India as well. I was therefore, required to accept the responsibility as a matter of duty. I agreed, but made it clear that I would have to be given a free hand if I was to show results in the general elections which were due in February 1967.[58]

As these comments show, Madhok took office with the firm intention of restoring the authority of the presidency in relation to the party secretariat, and he also asserted his right to interpret party policy. The text of a speech which he delivered at Ahmedabad on 7 August 1966 was published under the title, *What Jana Sangh Stands For*, and attracted a great deal of attention as his statement of the party's viewpoint.[59]

[58] Balraj Madhok, *Stormy Decade* (*Indian Politics*) *1970–80* (New Delhi, second edition, 1982), p. 198. See also Balraj Madhok, *RSS and Politics* (New Delhi, 1986), p. 59.

[59] Interview with Balraj Madhok, New Delhi, 15 May1984. See also Balraj Madhok, *Why Jana Sangh?* (Bombay, n.d.).

The shift in power to the presidency was bound to weaken the post of general secretary and restrict Upadhyaya's freedom to act as the party's guide and spokesman. He apparently indicated at this time that he wished to be relieved of the post of general secretary, but Madhok persuaded him to remain in office.[60] In the secretariat there were several appointments which were creating difficulties; one concerned the post of organizing secretary, which had been given to Sundar Singh Bhandari by Bachhraj Vyas during his presidency, thus placing Bhandari above the other secretaries and second in line to the general secretary. Madhok has claimed that the RSS leadership wanted him to nominate Bhandari for the position but that Vajpayee had threatened not to join the Working Committee unless he were appointed to the post. In the end, Madhok chose Vajpayee as organizing secretary and demoted Bhandari to the rank of an ordinary secretary, alongside Jagannathrao Joshi, Nana Deshmukh, and a new appointee, Yagya Datt Sharma, who had been general secretary of the Punjab unit for several years.[61] Madhok claimed subsequently that Bhandari had taken offence at this decision. 'Since I did not appoint you organizing secretary in the wider interest of the party', he wrote to Bhandari in November 1972, 'you non-cooperated with me for the two years I was president of the Party and have continued to behave as my personal enemy since then.'[62]

Apart from dealing with such organizational problems, Madhok had to guide his party through a number of difficult political situations in the course of 1966. Perhaps the most serious was that caused by the central government's decision to divide the Punjab

[60] Interview with Balraj Madhok, New Delhi, 15 May 1984. In a recent publication, Madhok has pointed out that, when he was told that Upadhyaya 'would not be available to me as a general secretary', he 'overcame this hurdle after a personal request' to Golwalkar (*RSS and Politics*, p. 59).

[61] Madhok, *RSS and Politics*, op. cit., p. 59. See also Varshney, *Jana Sangh—RSS and Balraj Madhok*, op. cit., p. 26. For details of secretarial appointments, see the lists of members of the 1965 and 1966 working committees published in *Organiser*, 8 February 1965, p. 7 and *The Statesman*, Delhi, 9 May 1966, p. 7.

[62] Letter from Madhok to Bhandari, 22 November 1972, in Varshney, *Jana Sangh—RSS and Balraj Madhok*, op. cit., pp. 102–11, quotation from p. 109. See also letter from Madhok to Vajpayee, 23 September 1969, in ibid., pp. 84–90, especially pp. 85–6.

to form a smaller, predominantly Sikh, state of the same name and a new, predominantly Hindu state of Haryana; the Jana Sangh had always stood out against earlier moves to subdivide the Punjab, and it set out to agitate against this proposal and finally accepted its implementation only with great reluctance. The party again became the centre of attention later in the year when it was one of the organizations blamed for the demonstration in New Delhi on 7 November against cow-slaughter, which ended in rioting. In both cases, the party was in danger of being drawn into exposed political positions by extreme elements amongst its followers but Madhok and his colleagues were able to keep it within the boundaries of constitutional politics while making its views in the issues quite clear. Madhok was thus able to build up good relations with the other non-Communist opposition parties, and with Swatantra Party in particular, and thus placed the party in a good position from which to contest the fourth general elections, held early in 1967. From these, the Jana Sangh emerged with 35 seats in the Lok Sabha and increased numbers in the northern Legislative Assemblies, and after the poll joined a number of coalition governments at the state levels.

By 1967 the number of the party's central secretaries in the central parliament had grown significantly. Bhandari had been elected to the Rajya Sabha in April 1966 and Madhok, Vajpayee, and Yagya Datt Sharma were all returned to the Lok Sabha in the 1967 elections. Madhok was thus in a position to offer the party leadership from a parliamentary base, much as Mookerjee had done in the early 1950s, thereby causing a shift in power relations which further weakened the public role of the general secretary. The latter had either to accept this change and the inevitable loss of power which it entailed, or to strengthen his own position, and Upadhyaya's decision to bid for the presidency in succession to Madhok was in effect a reassertion of the authority of the organization. The differences between the two men were similar to those which had existed between Mookerjee and his RSS lieutenants in the early 1950s, but on this occasion the outcome was never in doubt. Upadhyaya was chosen to succeed Madhok as President of the Jana Sangh in December 1967 and at once took the secretariat in hand, promoting Bhandari to the post of general secretary and appointing Vajpayee, Jagannathrao Joshi, Deshmukh, and P. Parameswaran, a newcomer from Kerala

to other secretarial posts.[63] He was set to make the presidency the driving force of the organization, just as he had used the general secretaryship to co-ordinate and develop it after 1955, but this new venture was cut short when, on 11 February 1968, he was found dead, apparently murdered, near Mughal Sarai railway station. Once again, therefore, the Jana Sangh faced a crisis of leadership succession. The outcome was that Vajpayee was appointed to take Upadhyaya's place as national president and that, under his direction, the organization remained firmly in control of the party.

Conclusion

The Jana Sangh began its existence with considerable advantages: a national leader of genuine stature, the opportunity to exploit the widespread sympathy for Hindu traditionalist ideas when these were being dismissed in liberal circles as 'communalist', and a ready-made organizational cadre in the young pracharaks who had been seconded to the party by the RSS. Why then did the party fail to achieve the degree of electoral support which might have been predicted for it? In this article, we have approached this question by considering the evolution of the party's leadership and organizational framework, while acknowledging that other factors, such as the party's identification with Hindi chauvinism, must be left aside for the time being.

Mookerjee favoured taking the party along a course which would have enabled him to appeal, first, to that field of electoral opinion which was identified with Hindu traditionalism and had earlier been attached to the Congress party and, second, to those sections of the middle classes which were likely to be alienated by the Nehru government's interest in extending the role of the state in the control of the economy. In parliamentary terms, his strategy implied building up a substantial Jana Sangh contingent in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha after the first general elections, attracting other parties to that contingent, and thus constructing a broad non-Congress front, with the aim of defeating the ruling party at either the second or the third general elections. Given these aims, it was a mistake for Mookerjee to have allowed

[63] *Organiser*, 14 January 1968, p. 3.

himself and his party to be associated with the satyagraha for the closer integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India but this mistake was by no means irredeemable; had Mookerjee not died in June 1953, he would probably have experienced little difficulty in getting the party back on the path he had chosen for it in 1951.

However, the failure of Mauli Chandra Sharma to overcome the challenge presented by Upadhyaya and his supporters in the party's internal crisis of 1954 determined that the Jana Sangh would follow a course which diverged sharply from that charted by Mookerjee. Sharma, perhaps reluctantly, had been forced to defend the main lines of Mookerjee's essential project—a flexible party capable of responding to and representing those sectors of middle-class opinion which the Congress party was tending to neglect; an open party, prepared to offer political careers to a wide variety of people and to conduct its affairs under public scrutiny; and an accommodating party, prepared to make alliances with all kinds of groups within the broad spectrum of the non-Communist opposition. On the other hand, Upadhyaya was upholding an approach to party-building which was cautious and defensive, an approach which expressed the reluctance of the RSS to accept the compromises and pragmatism of the established party system, which placed a high value on discipline and loyalty, and which relied on the ability of a young, untried, but zealous leadership to make a successful bid for power at some time in the future, when the older generation of politicians had been revealed as a spent force.

Under Upadhyaya's guidance, the party developed along these lines until the mid-1960s, when its new leaders were obliged to adapt themselves to the rapid changes in national politics which followed the death of Nehru in May 1964. For the first time since independence, the opposition parties sensed the possibility of victory and began to explore the possibilities of co-operation much more systematically than in the past. The opportunity to break through the Congress party's defences and to reach new audiences meant that the parties had to reconsider their campaign strategies, and in particular to identify election leaders who could communicate readily and effectively with the public. The Jana Sangh's response was to turn to Balraj Madhok and much of the credit for the party's relative success at the 1967 polls was given to his style of robust and direct leadership. This outcome

could well have been taken as a vindication of the principle that a Hindu nationalist party does best when it trusts its constituency, and leaves controlling power with its parliamentary groups and their leaders. However, as we have seen, the Jana Sangh actually took the opposite course, and subsequently reaffirmed the primacy of its central organizational groups in the conduct of the party's affairs.

Briefly, then, the Jana Sangh under Upadhyaya, from 1955 onwards, adopted a style of party activity which maintained discipline and control at the expense of openness and adaptability and which therefore left the party badly placed to exploit the weaknesses in the Congress party's political empire which were revealed in the early 1960s. It was the Swatantra Party and not the Jana Sangh which offered the most effective criticism of the Congress government's economic policies from the perspective of economic and political liberalism, and it was poorly organized non-partisan associations such as the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan which sustained the neglected cause of Hindu traditionalism with most credibility. The Jana Sangh's remoteness enabled it to maintain discipline, and to preserve its privileged connection with the RSS, but left it beyond the reach of those interests which were beginning to break away from the Congress party in the second decade of independence.

6

A Specific Party-building Strategy: The Jana Sangh and the RSS Network[+]

CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT

Jana Sangh is a party with a difference...[It] is not a party but a movement. It springs from the craving of the nation to come into its own. It is the urge of the nation to assert and accomplish what it has been destined to.

D. Upadhyaya in *Organiser*, Divali Special, 1964, p. 11

Although they claimed to be apolitical, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS's) leaders were driven to an interest in power by their advocacy of a Hindu Rashtra. Golwalkar may have thought that the government should accept an advisory and consultative role for the RSS on the model of the traditional relationship between temporal power and spiritual authority; he may also have regarded participation in party politics as the antithesis of the organization's basic mission. But some *swayamsevaks* thought the RSS should be directly involved in party politics, and they therefore became associated with the Jana Sangh, a party initiated by S. P. Mookerjee.

The participation of some swayamsevaks in the work of the Jana Sangh and their subsequent takeover of the party was part of an elaborate division of labour within the total membership of the RSS. After Independence, the RSS decided to build up a whole range of affiliated organizations within different sectors and institutions of Indian society as a means of infusing Hindu nationalist values

[+] Excerpts from *Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics* (London: Hurst and Publishers, 1996).

into public life. To this end it formed a students' union and a trade union. The association of swayamsevaks with the Jana Sangh belonged to this context, and was therefore seen as an application in the sphere of party politics of the principle that the social and psychological reform of Hindu society was needed to provide the cultural basis for a Hindu Rashtra in every sector of national life.

With this in mind, RSS workers within the Jana Sangh felt that the new party should avoid the practice of winning elections by co-opting local notables. Their technique of party-building was essentially long term and relied on a network of disciplined and dedicated activists. This pattern is well illustrated by the *modus operandi* of those RSS organizers who were responsible for establishing the Jana Sangh in certain regions of central India. The strategy which they employed was 'Sangathanist' in the sense that it relied on an integrated team of organizers (known as *sangathan mantris*—organizing secretaries) and was designed to ensure that the party's support was a coherent constituency rather than an assemblage of individual followings belonging to particular notables.

The RSS and Politics

Officially the RSS showed no interest in state power when India became independent. However the main objective of the RSS, the formation of the Hindu Rashtra, was eminently political and precluded the organization from ignoring the sphere of the state after India won independence. The only question, then, was what kind of rapport with politics the RSS was to establish. Certain statements made by Golwalkar after Independence virtually endowed the RSS with the role of a political counsellor by bringing the traditional connection between temporal power and spiritual authority into play:

> The political rulers were never the standard-bearers of our society. They were never taken as the props of our nationai life. Saints and sages, who had risen above the mundane temptations of self and power and had dedicated themselves wholly for establishing a happy, virtuous and integrated state of society were its constant torch-bearers. They represented the *dharmasatta* [religious authority]. The king was only an ardent follower of that higher moral authority.[1]

[1] M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Jagarana Prakashan, 1966), p. 93.

Golwalkar was invoking from Hindu tradition the king's *guru* (*Rajguru*); and because of its promotion of a Sanskritized culture and respect for the values of renunciation, the chief of the RSS proposed for his organization the traditional function of dharmic counsellor to the state power.[2] Expounding upon the mission of the RSS, Golwalkar wrote that:

> We aspire to become the radiating centre of all the age-old cherished ideals of our society—just as the indescribable power which radiates through the sun. Then the political power which draws its life from that source of society, will have no other [goal] to reflect the same radiance.[3]

With this, one reaches the limit of Golwalkar's indifference to the state, since he visibly covets a role as counsellor to the prince. Thus his apolitical orientation had already been amended by this opening up to the political domain, limited though it still was, when, at the end of the 1940s, it was actively questioned by the more 'activist' swayamsevaks.[4]

The RSS and Its Affiliates

Before 1947, the only organization affiliated directly to the RSS was the Rashtrasevika Samiti, a women's organization which had been founded on lines similar to the RSS in 1936. After independence, the RSS decided to form a set of affiliated organizations which became known collectively as the 'Sangh parivar' (the RSS family). The Jana Sangh had been formed separately by Mookerjee, and therefore lay partly outside the ambit of the RSS until the swayamsevaks asserted their control in the mid-1950s. From that

[2] K. R. Malkani willingly attributes the function of *Raj guru* to the RSS and defines it as that of 'moral counsellor' (Interview, 16 November 1989, New Delhi).

[3] M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 103. See also his description of the articulation between the king and the *guru* (ibid., p. 100).

[4] I borrow the term 'activist' from W. Andersen and S. Damle. In their typology of RSS members, the 'activists' are those 'who believed that the RSS should have a broader agenda' and the 'traditionalists' those 'who were wary of such moves outside the narrow character-building environment of the *shakha*'. See W. Andersen and S. D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1987), p. 108.

point onwards it was reshaped in the mould of the RSS and its role adapted to conform with the division of labour within the 'Sangh parivar'.

The Jana Sangh, Replica and Auxiliary of the RSS

From 1954 onwards, leaders of the Jana Sangh with an RSS background reshaped the political programme and organization of the party in conformity with those of the mother organization. The main architect of this transformation was D. Upadhyaya, who was to remain the party's general secretary till 1967 with the full support of Golwalkar. In the eyes of his peers and of those in charge in Nagpur, he represented the 'ideal swayamsevak'.[5] Upadhyaya abandoned his studies—after completing the first year of MA in English literature—in order to dedicate himself entirely to the RSS, which he had first joined while in college at Kanpur in 1937. He worked for the organization first as pracharak in Lakhimpur district, then as joint *prant pracharak*—he was the first non-Maharashtrian to hold this responsibility—between 1947 and 1951[6] and finally as an editor, launching a weekly publication, *Panchjanya*, which subsequently became a pan-Indian journal. Obliged to operate underground after Gandhi's assassination, he was one of the leading instigators of the *satyagraha* of 1949 in his province. He then went on to help frame the RSS's constitution and in effect founded the Jana Sangh in Uttar Pradesh.[7] Upadhyaya was considered the ideal swayamsevak not only because, with humility and discipline, he had consecrated his whole life to the cause, to the extent of refusing marriage, but also because, in the opinion of RSS veterans, 'his discourse reflected the pure thought current of the Sangh'.[8] It was therefore not surprising that he should have progressively taken on the task of endowing the Jana Sangh with a doctrine of its own, although one that seemed to be a variant of the ideology of the RSS.

[5] He was described thus on his death by Bhaurao Deoras. See *Organiser*, 25 February 1968, p. 3.

[6] D. Puchpa, *Sangh-ninva Mein Visarjit* (Hindi), op. cit., p. 109.

[7] S. Raje (ed.), *Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya—A Profile* (New Delhi: Deendayal Research Institute, 1972).

[8] Babasaheb Apte, 'Panditjit had a Cool Head and a Warm Heart', *Organiser*, 10 March 1968, p. 5.

The two principal texts in which he set out his political thought are *The Two Plans* (1958) and *Integral Humanism* (1965), these were to provide the bases of the Jana Sangh's foundation of its 'Principles and Policies' in 1965. The salient point here was the diminution in importance of the state by comparison with society. This may have been in conformity with the ideology of the RSS, but was paradoxical in the case of a political party whose vocation was, in theory, the conquest of power.

For Upadhayaya the 'basic cause of the problems facing Bharat is the neglect of its national identity' shown by Westernized and unprincipled politicians.[9] However his model of the nation was the Western one, and he recognized that 'nationalism is the oldest and strongest'[10] of the 'isms' invented in the West. By means of reference to the so-called 'historical' *varnas*, he tried in his turn to affirm the existence of a Hindu nation. His thought process thus remained within the framework that stigmatized and emulated the Other through a re-interpretation of tradition.

Following in the footsteps of Golwalkar, he rejected the theory of a social contract, explaining that 'society is "self-born"' as an 'organic entity':[11]

> In our concept of four castes, they are thought of as analogous to the different limbs of Virat-Purusha.... These limbs are not only complementary to one another, but even further, there is individuality, unity. There is a complex identity of interest, identity of belonging.... If this idea is not kept alive, the cases instead of being complementary, can produce conflict. But then this is distortion.... This is indeed the present condition of our society.[12]

His reference to the scheme of the four varnas should not be taken to mean that Upadhyaya favoured the restoration of this social system. Such a hierarchical organization of society would have been regarded as illegitimate and hence rejected by RSS ideologues because they considered it to be divisive. When RSS writers refer to the varna system they are using it as a metaphor in the sense proposed by Schlanger, who shows that such

[9] D. Upadhyaya, *Integral Humanism* (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1965), p. 5.
[10] Ibid., p. 8.
[11] Ibid., p. 32.
[12] Ibid., p. 43.

metaphors can be used to promote a unitarian ideological project.[13] In this case, Upadhyaya is employing the framework of the varna system to make the point that the origins of contemporary Indian society reside in an ideal organic society, which was an integrated whole, harmonious and free of conflict, and which was therefore almost a nation. Moreover, Upadhyaya often inverted the two terms; the accent on unity and submission to *dharma* (from which proceeded the genius—*chiti*—of the society of varnas) encouraged this assimilation of society and nation. The primacy accorded to society explains the ideal of decentralization promoted by Upadhyaya, for whom the fulcrum of national life was to be found in the local reality of the villages:

> In our socio-political set-up, the king and the State were never considered supreme.... The mightiest of the kings did not ever disturb the Panchayats. Similarly there were associations on the basis of trade. These two were never disturbed by the State; on the contrary, their autonomy was recognized.... Thus the State was concerned only with some aspects of life of the Society.[14]

The ideology of the Jana Sangh, codified by Upadhyaya, followed the RSS in the value it accorded to the society–nation in comparison to the state. Certainly the reference to the varnas contrasted with the egalitarian mission of the RSS, but this difference was logical: it was this which separated the world of the sect from that of the actual society in which conflict had to be eliminated, a task that the RSS entrusted, in particular, to its affiliates.

A Counter-Model of Party-Building

The organizational structure of the Jana Sangh obviously resembles that of the RSS. First, the sangathan mantris are the functional equivalent of Pracharaks just as the latter worked under the direct authority of Nagpur, the true hierarchy at the heart of the Jana Sangh linked the sangathan mantris to the general secretary (Upadhyaya) via the national secretaries in charge of the four zones and the state organizers. Second, the party presidents at the state as well as the national level play the same role as the

[13] J. E. Schlanger, *Les Métaphores du Corps* (Paris: Vrin, 1971), p. 31.
[14] D. Upadyaya, *Integral Humanism*, op. cit., p. 62.

sanghchalaks.[15] After 1954 the party president was in effect a figurehead who (like the sanghchalaks) was selected to enhance the respectability of the Hindu nationalists.[16]

The existence of an inner and an outer circle, separating those who were able to capitalize on links with the RSS from the rest, took institutional form in the early 1960s. As amended in 1963, the Jana Sangh's constitution distinguished between the party's ordinary and its active members. The latter were effectively defined as those who had been active in one of the party's executive or plenary bodies or in one of the affiliated organizations, which would have included the RSS. Whereas ordinary members could participate in elections to the executives of their local units, only active members could serve on bodies above that level.[17] This two-tier membership structure practically ensured that the RSS, whose workers would have been concentrated in the category of active members, retained a strong presence within the district and state levels of the Jana Sangh's organization.

Just as in the RSS, the party's internal elections tended in any case to be a formality. According to the constitution of the Jana Sangh, the president, at the national level as well as in the states, embodied supreme authority, above all because it was he who nominated the Working Committee. In fact, true control was exercised by the general secretary and the national secretaries, who also dominated the Working Committee.[18] The election to

[15] In Madhya Pradesh the Jana Sangh presidents were not 'encouraged to play an active administrative role'. Interview with K. Thakre, 23 November 1989.

[16] Prem Nath Dogra (party president, 1954–6), A District Officer in Jammu under British rule, had been chosen as sanghchalak of that region in 1942 (*Organiser*, 29 November 1954, pp. 3–143); Dev Prasad Ghosh (1956–60), an advocate of the Calcutta High Court and a prominent academic, was first a luminary of the Congress Nationalist Party of Malaviya and then of the Hindu Mahasabha, before joining the Jana Sangh in 1951 (ibid., 30 April 1956, p. 8); Pitamber Das (1960–1) was a veteran Congressman who became sanghchalak at Mawana (UP) in 1943 and was later chosen as the Jana Sangh's president in Uttar Pradesh. See *Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Parishad ke Sadasyon ka Jivan Parichay* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Parishad Sachivalay, 1965), p. 48 [Hindi].

[17] B. D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 78.

[18] H. T. Davey, 'The Transformation of an Ideological Movement into an Aggregative Party: A Case Study of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1969, p. 164.

the presidency took place every two years, with the party's state units electing an All India General Council (AIGC) which in turn nominated the president, but at each level the process was supervised by the sangathan mantris. The controlling authorities at state level were appointed in the same way.

Even if there was debate, the actual voting was generally unanimous in conformity with the RSS code of discipline: once a majority choice had emerged, all were commanded to rally to it. Here the sangathan mantris naturally relied on their moral authority, in particular when it came to preventing factionalism among the inevitable losers when appointments to posts of responsibility were being made and candidates nominated in the party before elections. Their proven disinterestedness—they refused all public appointments—contributed greatly to their power of persuasion. Given their devotion to the 'cause' of Hindu nationalism, their appeal for unity in the name of the movement's ideological objectives was generally both credible and effective.

The Jana Sangh thus benefited from the dual party structure described above. On the one hand, Jana Sanghis involved in public action contested elections and assumed charge of the presidentship at the local, state, and national levels. On the other hand, sangathan mantris were not supposed to face the electorate or assume power in official, government bodies. They formed the organizational backbone of the party and drew their discipline and like-mindedness from their shared training in the RSS. Most of them were former pracharaks and cohesiveness was their norm. The sangathan mantris derived prestige and a particular authority from their position in the party structure. This enabled them to defuse factional fights between party leaders from other sectors (MLAs, MPs, or other office-bearers) who might compete for a post. However, the division between the two categories must not be exaggerated; after 1954 the Jana Sangh also owed its cohesion to the fact that most of its cadres and leaders were members of the RSS, imbued with the ideology and discipline of this organization.

The form of the Jana Sangh reflected a conception of party structure which was relatively original in the Indian context. Many Indian parties took shape as the result of co-option and 'aggregation'. Local or regional leaders regarded as having influence because of their wealth, the size of their landholdings, or their prestige within a caste association were given political responsibility or

put up as candidates at elections. This led to the creation of a pyramid of influence. A political notable would attract 'associates' prepared to guarantee their support according to a clientelistic logic; multiplied many times, this would give the party in question a base of considerable size, like a vast coalition. The Hindu Mahasabha worked on the same principle, but the notables within it represented only a narrow periphery of society and thus could not assure it of any substantial political weight. The Congress came close to the classic form of this type, and functioned as a great interlocking mass of personal fiefs, also called 'vote banks'. Myron Weiner emphasized the fact that 'Congress is primarily concerned with recruiting members and winning support. It does not mobilize; it aggregates': 'In its effort to win, Congress adapts itself to the local power structures. It recruits from among those who have local power and influence'.[19]

The Jana Sangh adheres to a different logic, close to the method used by the RSS, one we have described as 'Sangathanist': it gives precedence to building a solid network of activists, capable at one and the same time of implanting the party at the local level through social work and of propagating Hindu nationalist ideology, albeit at the cost, if necessary, of unpopularity. This was discernible in Punjab and Rajasthan as well as Madhya Pradesh.

In 1952 the party in Punjab nominated, out of forty-three candidates for election to the Vidhan Sabha, thirty 'little-known RSS workers and alumni rather than co-opting local notables'.[20] The result was all the more disastrous because the party refused to campaign on regionalist themes that were of growing concern to the voting public. In 1957, the Jana Sangh in Punjab succumbed to this demagogic temptation. Since it recognized that two languages were spoken in the region, it campaigned for the promotion of Hindi, with the result that it won nine MLA seats and its ranks were swollen by defenders of Hindi, including many Arya Samajists. However this increase in its manpower by 'aggregation' made it vulnerable to dissension; in particular, the Congress was able to negotiate some concessions with the Arya Samaj leaders. The RSS

[19] M. Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1967), p. 15.

[20] G. A. Heeger, 'Discipline versus Mobilization: Party Building and the Punjab Jana Sangh', *Asian Survey*, vol. 12, 10 October 1972, p. 868.

then immediately applied itself to re-establishing its authority in the Jana Sangh, which cut it off from its fringe supporters. Partly as a consequence, it lost support at the polls in 1962.

The Jana Sangh also ignored the possibility of mobilizing support from influential sections of society in Rajasthan, where it did not hesitate to alienate Rajput landlords. As the 1951–2 elections approached, associations of landowners were looking for a political mouthpiece to reinforce their opposition to the Congress, which had just announced the abolition of the zamindari and jagirdari systems. They first opted for the Jana Sangh;[21] then the Kshatriya Mahasabha (which was dominated by Rajput landowners) sponsored the formation of a Samyukta Dal (Party of Unity) in association with the Ram Rajya Parishad and the Hindu Mahasabha. The Jana Sangh refused to join the Samyukta Dal so as to remain faithful to its position on agrarian reform, S. S. Bhandari fearing 'feudalism coming in by the back door of democracy'.[22] Finally the Rajputs concentrated their support on the Ram Rajya Parishad and helped the party to gain a clear success in the state.[23] However, the majority of the 8 MLAs returned on a Jana Sangh ticket were Rajput landlords and they abandoned the party when it appeared that it was not likely to amend its stand on the question of land reform.[24] The refusal by the Jana Sangh to seek growth by binding itself to particular social groups was on a par with its hostility to any alliance likely to be prejudicial to its discipline or dilute its identity.

After the elections of 1951–2, S. P. Mookerjee, who was always anxious to form a large opposition party, had sought a rapprochement between the Jana Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha, since the rivalry between them had injured the electoral performance of both. This cause was taken up on Mookerjee's death by N. C. Chatterjee, president of the Hindu Mahasabha.[25] But in December 1953, doubtless under pressure from the RSS, M. C. Sharma, who till then had favoured the project, described the Hindu Mahasabha as a 'communalist creation' which 'wel-come[d] princes and

[21] Mookerjee Papers, F-168 (letter from Vijay Singh to Mookerjee, 27 June 1951).

[22] Ibid., F-173 (letter from Bhandari to Mookerjee, 23 November 1951).

[23] B. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 179–81.

[24] Interview with S. S. Bhandari.

[25] *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 11 July 1952, in N. C. Chatterjee Papers, vol. VIII.

zamindars and defend[ed] vested interests'.[26] This was the end of the first attempt at amalgamation. However, Chatterjee, together with V. G. Deshpande, persevered. In January 1955 they had an abortive meeting with Golwalkar,[27] and in February 1956 they negotiated with Upadhyaya but without being able to agree on a name for the intended new party. The Jana Sangh was unwilling to change its name.[28] Many Hindu Sabhaites then joined the Jana Sangh, including Hardayal Devgun, who was one of the mainstays of the Hindu Sabha in Delhi and secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha till 1958.[29] He was followed by V. G. Deshpande. The Jana Sangh had at last attained its objectives, because since the outset the party had conceived of an alliance with the Hindu Mahasabha solely in terms of the latter rallying to its own programme or even being completely absorbed by it.[30]

The Sangathanist strategy adopted by the Jana Sangh meant that its practical policy in the 1950s boiled down essentially to the creation of a militant network dedicated, like the RSS, patiently to imposing its vision of the world over a long period by working at the grassroots. Up to the early 1960s, the Jana Sangh's leaders considered that they had to resist any drift into propaganda or alliances that would be counter to the party's ideology.[31] In 1962, Upadhyaya justified this attitude by arguing that united fronts of the opposition were bound to 'degenerate into a struggle for power by opportunist elements coming together in the interest of expediency.[32] He wanted to build the Jana Sangh into an alternative party to the Congress and looked upon elections as an 'opportunity to educate the people on political issues and to challenge the right of the Congress to be in power'.[33] The Jana Sangh rejected alliances with particular groups or their political representatives because in future it would convert sectional (that is regional or casteist corporatist) interests to the

[26] *The Statesman*, 7 December 1952 in ibid.
[27] *Hindu Outlook*, 31 January 1955, p. 1.
[28] Ibid., 28 February 1956, p. 1.
[29] *Who's Who in Lok Sabha—1967*, op. cit., p. 132.
[30] M. Weiner, *Party Politics in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 208–9.
[31] See the resolution of the party general executive in July 1956 in M. A. Jhangiani, *Jana Sangh and Swatantra*, op. cit., p. 143.
[32] D. Upadhyaya, 'Jana Sangh', *Seminar*, No. 29, January 1962, p. 20.
[33] Ibid.

irenicism or organicism of its Hindu nationalism, and thus win over its competitors—as it had already done with the Hindu Sabhaites. Here one finds oneself in the presence of an alternative model of party-building, as G. Heeger has already suggested:

> Parties can be more than aggregates put together to form a winning coalition. As might be surmised from the term 'party' itself, they can reflect a claim by the party that it—a party—address itself correctly to and for the nation as a whole.[34]

Heeger added that 'for the Jana Sangh leadership, their party is to be a microcosm of an ideal India' and that the distinction these leaders made 'between the "party-building" and mobilizing support has exacted a price' in electoral terms. In the eyes of those who controlled the party after 1954, electoral results were certainly less important than local implantation and propaganda, and indeed between 1954 and 1959 the number of members and local committees increased, respectively, from 143,000 and 2000 to 215,370 and 2551[35] while the number of candidates nominated by the party in the Vidhan Sabha elections fell between 1952 and 1957 from 727 to 582.

In the 1950s swayamsevaks became involved in the political arena through the Jana Sangh, a party modelled on the image of the RSS. The Jana Sangh aspired to develop through a Sangathanist network of activists that would make it co-extensive with society. Conceived as a front organization of the RSS, like the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) or the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), it plunged into social work with the intention of establishing, or re-establishing, an organicist type of society—one purged of tension. The traversing of social and political space by means of a network largely borrowed from the RSS and the implementation of social welfare activism were to be the two complimentary wings of the Sangathanist strategy. This strategy of penetration of the body of society, according to those who conceived it, would, in the long term, naturally bring the Jana Sangh to power because the Hindu nation would eventually recognize it as its appointed political representative.

The involvement of the RSS in the political arena introduced an important innovation into Hindu nationalist politics. For

[34] G. A. Heeger, 'Discipline versus Mobilization', op. cit., pp. 864–5.

[35] For more details, see B. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 78–9.

the first time the network of swayamsevaks made themselves available—partly at least—for political action. This was made clear in Madhya Pradesh during the 1951–2 elections, just as in Uttar Pradesh where 100,000 activists took part in the election campaign.[36] Ten years later, in the 1962 elections, the Jana Sangh in Uttar Pradesh announced its deployment of 100,000 activists: according to press reports they canvassed bank employees in Kanpur, worked their way through the suburbs of Lucknow, infiltrated villages in Gorakhpur district, and organized half of the election meetings held in Varanasi.[37]

However, it remained to be seen whether the strategy of building up the Jana Sangh by the use of Sangathanist techniques would result in electoral success. By the late 1950s, the party's workers were still concentrating on the tasks of spreading and strengthening its organizational framework; they engaged in propaganda and agitational campaigns only where an issue seemed to them of special importance. It was therefore possible for the Jana Sangh's leaders to claim that the poor election results of their party were only to be expected, but the fact remained that a weak electoral performance was bound to arouse concern.

At the level of ideology, the formation of Hindu nationalism has been analysed in terms of a strategy of stigmatizing and emulating the Other. However, the Hindu traditionalism of certain members of the Congress presented an alternative position which suggested to men like Mookerjee the need for a strategy of rapprochement in relation to the Congress up till 1951.

As far as the mobilization of support was concerned, this attitude corresponded to an effort at integration which, with Mookerjee, took the form of a search for allies at the price of a certain dilution of Hindu nationalist ideology. The other strategy to mobilize support which Hindu nationalists employed was the manipulation of symbols and exploitation of issues such as Ramjanmabhumi and refugees from East Pakistan. This approach was hampered by the political context, the political class being largely attached to a

[36] S. V. Kogekar and R. L. Park, 'Uttar Pradesh' in S. V. Kogekar and R. I. Park (eds), *Reports on the Indian General Elections, 1951–2* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1956), p. 159.

[37] *Organiser*, 21 August 1961, p. 16; *The Statesman* (Delhi), 4 January 1962, p. 7, and 7 January 1962, p. 7; *National Herald*, 10 January 1962, p. 3 and 1 February 1962, p. 4; *The Indian Express*, 30 March 1962.

politics of secularism, to the point of supporting the sometimes repressive measures introduced by Nehru.

At the level of party-building strategy, the Jana Sangh was based essentially on its Sangathanist network, which devoted its main efforts during the 1950s to consolidating itself. The alternative method, on which the Hindu Mahasabha relied and which Mookerjee explored in the early 1950s, could have consisted of an 'aggregation' of local notables and politicians, but this would have made the Jana Sangh vulnerable to a dilution of its identity and undermined the internal discipline on which it had set such store.

It is apparent from these strategies that a moderate combination would involve cooperation with Hindu traditionalists and a pragmatic effort at integration in mainstream political activity—notably by means of alliances and increased reliance on local notables—while a more militant, even aggressive, combination would consist, for the Jana Sangh, of placing its Sangathanist network at the service of an instrumentalist strategy designed to use Hindu nationalist themes for the purpose of mobilization. From 1954 onwards, this was the preferred combination. However the three strands of which it consisted did not come together till the late 1980s, due essentially to the weaknesses of the Sangathanist approach and the constraints imposed by the political context.

By choosing the Sangathanist method, the Jana Sangh was distancing itself from the rivalries between notables which had always undermined the organization of the Hindu Mahasabha. But in doing so it denied itself the advantage of either their influence or their popularity. It relied mainly on the appeal of its cadres and their Hindu nationalist ideology which, in the 1950s, proved less attractive to voters than the promises of socio-economic development made by the Congress. This partly explains the party's modest results in the elections: in 1952 it won three seats in the Lok Sabhas and thirty-five in the Vidhan Sabhas and in 1957, respectively, four and forty-six, an unremarkable development. At the end of the 1950s, the Jana Sangh faced a dilemma: should it pursue the Sangathanist logic of a slow penetration of the whole of Indian society, in the style of the RSS, if this entailed repeated electoral defeats? The Sangathanist method seemed ill-suited to the demands of a political party, as Bhaurao Deoras later implicity admitted:

> In politics, as pandit Deendayal [Upadhyaya] used to say, the measuring rod of success is the number of seats that you win; but for Sangh, it is

the quality of the swayamsevaks we develop and the social influence that we wield which matters.[38]

From the 1960s the party oscillated between a strategy of integration with legitimate politics and one of militant ethno-religious mobilization. The first option involved acquiescence in secularist norms, the elaboration of an economic programme likely to challenge the government's policies, the maximization of the patriotic content of its ideology, and a growing, reliance on notables. Such a course would allow the Jana Sangh to normalize its position within the political system but not without diluting its identity, which the Sangathanist network, close to the RSS, would find intolerable. For the latter the second strategy, based on the manipulation of the symbols of Hindu identity, ought to have been its preferred electoral strategy. However, it demanded two significant changes to the variables of our model: first, the activists' network had to expand and be supplemented by religious figures in order to amplify its mobilizatory capacity; and second, but more importantly, the instrumentalist strategy could not function effectively unless the constraints placed on it by the political context, particularly through the defence of secularism as a legitimate norm, were relaxed.

Local Cadres and Populism

At the end of the 1960s the Jana Sangh could no longer avoid a debate on the dilution of its ideology because of its participation in various coalition governments in the states after the fourth general election. The debate took place at two levels. First, it was contested between the pragmatists, namely the all-India leaders who wanted to give the party an opportunity to exercise power, and local cadres close to the RSS line who rejected strategies which would effectively have questioned the Hindu nationalist programme of the Jana Sangh. Second, it was fought out between those leaders, including Balraj Madhok, who were seeking integration with the Hindu traditionalist sector of Indian politics and others, such as Atal Behari Vajpayee, who favoured the use of populist appeals and were concerned with the protection of the party's separate identity. It was the latter group which finally prevailed.

[38] *Organiser*, 11 November 1984, p. 18.

Their victory revealed that the Sangathanist network and the RSS had retained its hold over the party. Indeed Vajpayee's line was more in tune with the aspirations of the party's local activists than Madhok's views. Madhok was expelled from the Jana Sangh in 1973 without much difficulty; nor did many of his followers leave the party. This episode and the change of strategy in the late 1960s and early 1970s suggest that the real division within the Jana Sangh was not vertical, of the factional type, but horizontal. It pitted against each other the all-India leaders and the local cadres who were deeply imbued with the RSS's ethic. In other words, the Sangathanist network played a greater role than rivalries at the top in shaping the Jana Sangh's strategy.

The strategy which the party adopted in the early 1970s entailed a new social and economic radicalism and an appeal to the patriotic sentiments engendered by the war of 1971 between India and Pakistan. However, in pursuing this course of action, Vajpayee and his colleagues found themselves at odds with the conservatives among the ranks of the party's notables and with the parties which were allied to the Jana Sangh. In any case, it was difficult to use populism as a means of building support when the Congress (R) under Mrs Gandhi was also exploiting the same appeal with considerable success.

The Main Division Within the Jana Sangh is Not Vertical but Horizontal

The Influence of the Sangathanist Network in Shaping Party Strategy

At the meeting of the All India General Council in April 1967, which had the task of pronouncing on the question of the Jana Sangh's being associated with coalitions, numerous delegates (including N. Johri for Madhya Pradesh) spoke out against co-operation with the Communists, which such coalitions entailed. They reminded their audience that the Jana Sangh's vocation was to replace the Congress, not merely inflict reverses on it at the price of ideological compromises.[39] They concluded by adopting an amendment recognizing the party's right to oppose those decisions

[39] *Organiser*, 30 April 1967, p. 4.

of coalition governments which went against its policy and interests.[40] This was in keeping with the position of the RSS, to which the Jana Sangh's local cadres had generally remained close. In April 1967, the general council of the RSS had given its approval to coalitions in the hope

> [...]that the present coming together of several parties will help understanding one another at close quarters, wipe out political 'untouchability' and animosity and bring about amity and harmony among the various political groups as envisaged by the Sangh.[41]

This formulation was symptomatic of the persistent desire of the movement to make Hindu nationalism a philosophy for the society as a whole rather than one associated with a single party within a system of alliances.

It is important not to neglect these responses to the way the Jana Sangh was evolving. The RSS certainly did not exercise tight control over the Jana Sangh; in general it gave its affiliated organizations considerable autonomy and was willing to take account of their advice concerning areas of policy in which they were expert. However, the RSS insisted on its right to oversee and orient the general activities of the 'Sangh parivar', and held annual meetings with representatives of its affiliates to discuss the co-ordination of their work. The Jana Sangh was represented at those meetings by Upadhyaya and subsequently by Deshmukh and then Bhandari. Second, and more importantly, the party's most specific attribute was its dependence on the network of activists which derived from the RSS and remained close to it. While those involved in electoral and ministerial politics might be amenable to compromises and could be convinced of the utility of forging alliances because of their interest in state power, the activists of the Sangathanist network revealed their unwavering attachment to doctrinal purity and the RSS. This strong bond was easy enough to apprehend at the local level, where the organizers of RSS affiliates (the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the Jana Sangh, etc.) traditionally consulted pracharaks, simply because they represented the heart of the Hindu nationalist combination and their constant journeying gave them an overall view of the local context, allowing them not only to give advice but also to coordinate the activities of the

[40] Ibid., p. 15.
[41] Resolution of the ABPS in *RSS Resolves*, op. cit., pp. 56–7.

different organizations.[42] 'While the leaders of all ideological parties are constrained by the reluctance of their local cadres to compromise on 'doctrine', even to a small degree, this phenomenon assumes a particular importance in the relationship of the Jana Sangh leaders with the RSS and their Sangathanist network. In fact, the coalition governments disintegrated in 1968–9 partly because of the attitude of the Jana Sangh's local cadres. On one level they were prepared to make concessions about issues—such as the status of Urdu—which the national leadership was reconsidering; while on another they did not want to go too far in compromising the party's identity and were eager not to betray their social basis or hinder the promotion of interests close to the Hindu nationalist fold—for example, transfers of civil servants or education policy. This ambivalent attitude undoubtedly aroused the suspicions of partners of the Jana Sangh. Among the Jana Sanghis working at the state level, the Sangathanist cadres were naturally the least flexible. While the Jana Sanghi 'politicians' (MLAs and ministers) were willing to make concessions 'to maintain the delicate unity of the coalition' in Uttar Pradesh, the organizing wing, 'called on the party's district units to oppose a [grain procurement] scheme' (which the legislative wing supported) because it contradicted the ideology of the Jana Sangh and the interests of its social base.[43]

In 1969 the Jana Sangh decided that it would no longer associate itself with non-Congress coalitions given its unrewarding experiences of earlier experiments. It blamed its participation in the Samyukt Vidhayak Dal (SVD) government in Uttar Pradesh for the electoral reverse which it suffered there in the mid-term elections of 1969, when it won only 49 seats compared with 98 in 1967 and therefore lost its position as the principal non-Congress party to the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD), which captured 98 seats in the 1969 poll.

The reservations of the party's local cadres towards the strategy of moderation were an important factor in the search for a new

[42] I was, in particular, able to observe the importance of this set-up in Shivpuri district. Here, the heads of various offshoots of the RSS gathered every month to meet the pracharak in the RSS office.

[43] M. H. Johnson, 'The Relation between Land Settlement and Party Politics in Uttar Pradesh, India, 1950–63, with Special Reference to the Formation of the Bharatiya Kranti Dal', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sussex, 1975, pp. 198–9.

strategy by the Jana Sangh's leaders, one of whom, Madhok, openly criticized the participation of Jana Sanghis in coalition governments in the late 1960s. However, his campaign failed to make an impact because his alternative proposals also implied a dilution of the party's identity. By contrast, Vajpayee's populist line was more in tune with the expectations of the grassroots and the RSS.

The Choice between Traditionalist Integration and Sangathanist Populism

Madhok, who was president of the Jana Sangh in 1966–7, made a determined stand against participation in any government that included Communists.[44] But this was only so that he could propose a different type of alliance. He had long been in favour of an accord with the Swatantra Party, with which he sought to form a common parliamentary group in March 1967.[45] A Swatantra faction, headed by N. G. Ranga, had welcomed this attempt to forge an understanding.[46]

Madhok aspired to make the Jana Sangh the focal point of a loose grouping of conservative forces in opposition to the alliance which was taking shape between Indira Gandhi's Congress party and the Communists. A step in the direction of British-style bipartisanship seemed to have been taken in the autumn of 1969 with the formation of the Congress(O)—the 'O' standing for Organization—by Congress leaders who were out of sympathy with Mrs Gandhi. In their forefront was Morarji Desai, who had always been opposed to the Nehru line in the name of a Hindu traditionalism manifested with Gandhian overtones. As Francine Frankel has written:

> Desai's scorn for socialist ideology was ultimately an expression of essentially religious convictions that moral and spiritual development rather than material progress were the true yardsticks of human civilization. A man of ability as well as integrity, his challenge to Nehru's approach came less from a well-articulated liberal philosophy than a life style of personal austerities, religious devotion, and 'social' work that

[44] Letter from Madhok to S. S. Bhandari, 22 November 1972, cited in M. R. Varshney, *Jana Sangh, RSS and Balraj Madhok* (Aligarh: Varshney College, n.d.), p. 106.

[45] *The Hindustan Times*, 2 February 1968.

[46] Ranga even presided over a gathering of the RSS at Nagpur. See *The Statesman Weekly*, 12 October 1968, p. 2.

evoked memories of Gandhi and gained for him a substantial personal following inside the Congress party.[47]

Madhok saw the split in Congress as being one between the 'Patelists' and 'Nehruists'.[48] Therefore he called on the leaders of the former group (chiefly M. Desai and S. K. Patil) to promote a conservative party which would project itself as the defender of Hindu interests.[49] For Madhok, this plan went hand-in-hand with a militant Hinduism: at a conference in Patna in December 1969 he set forth his arguments for the necessary 'Indianization' (in effect 'Hinduization') of Muslims and Christians.[50] He suggested that the Jana Sangh should renounce the Sangathanist model and its specific identity to submerge itself in the tide of 'Hindu traditionalism'—as Mookerjee had envisaged at the time when Sardar Patel and Tandon represented a similar outlook in the top ranks of the Congress. The way forward indicated here prefigures what in fact happened in the later 1970s.

However, this conservative option was immediately criticized, especially by Vajpayee, who believed in the need to take greater account of social problems. In September 1968 he had supported the strikes for higher pay by employees in the central administration and demanded that the Lok Sabha should establish a minimum salary, to the considerable annoyance of Madhok,[51] while in 1969 he had criticized Madhok's opposition to the nationalization of the banks, which ran the risk of making the Jana Sangh appear as the defender of 'business'—whereas, according to Vajpayee, it had to become the champion of the 'common man'[52] with populist overtones.

Populism is a problematic notion in India as elsewhere. It is, as pointed out by Ionescu and Gellner, an 'elusive and protean'

[47] Francine Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947–1977* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 227.

[48] *The Statesman* (Delhi), 9 November 1969.

[49] *The Times of India*, 17 and 28 September 1969. Desai excluded any amalgamation but revealed that he wished to conclude an electoral alliance with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party in January 1970. See *The Statesman Weekly*, 10 January 1970, p. 2.

[50] These arguments figure in his book *Indianisation? What, Why and How* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1970).

[51] *The Hindustan Times*, 26 September 1968.

[52] *The Statesman* (Delhi), 3 September 1969.

concept.[53] Here I have used the term as synonymous with demagogy but it is also used in the sense proposed by Edward Shils:

> Populism proclaims that the will of the people as such is supreme over every other standard, over the standards of traditional institutions, over the autonomy of institutions and over the will of other strata. Populism identifies the will of the people with justice and morality.
>
> It exists wherever there is an ideology of popular resentment against the order imposed on society by a long-established, differentiated ruling class, which is believed to have a monopoly of power, property, breeding and culture.[54]

Hindu nationalism had latent affinities with populism. In fact it could be considered as a potentially populist doctrine to the extent that it placed a high value on the general will of the Hindu community, and implied that existing institutions, including those of the state, were not expressions of that will and therefore lacked legitimacy. But it was difficult for the RSS and the Jana Sangh to make these ideas explicit because they also represented the social and political interests of upper and intermediate castes, and thus the principle of hierarchy. Gradually, however, these organizations added populist overtones to their election campaigns. Upadhaya, who had frustrated Madhok's efforts to ally the Jana Sangh with the Swatantra Party in 1964, had been taking the party in a populist direction before his death in February 1968. In his presidential address to the party in 1967, Upadhyaya had put forward an argument in which he combined his social preoccupations with a certain activism:

> Those who are keen to preserve the *status quo* in the economic and social spheres, are unnerved by popular movements. They are wont to create an atmosphere of despair. We are sorry we cannot cooperate with them. For many of these public agitations are natural and necessary.[55]

According to Andersen and Damle, the orientation sought by Vajpayee not only had affinities 'with the world view of the RSS' but was also probably more in tune 'with the class background

[53] In 'Introduction' to G. Ionescu and E. Gellner (eds), *Populism—Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 1.

[54] E. Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1956), pp. 98 and 100–1.

[55] *Organiser*, 21 December 1967, p. 7.

of most *swayamsevaks*'.[56] Within the RSS, this strategic change of direction was supported by Balasaheb Deoras, an 'activist' who had succeeded E. Ranade as general secretary in 1965 and was committed to a more egalitarian social order than Golwalkar, who was ailing in the early 1970s.[57]

At the same time, the RSS had tightened its hold over the Jana Sangh. In 1967, Upadhyaya had taken over the presidency of the Jana Sangh from Madhok.[58] The Jana Sangh's decision to strengthen the party by reinforcing discipline of the Sangathanist variety was also widely evident—in the context of the SVD experiments—in its treatment of its MLAs, who 'were required to report to the local party organization and to take their instructions from it'.[59] Parallel to this, Upadhyaya announced that the party's network of paid full-time activists charged with the task of spreading its message was being enlarged;[60] henceforward, only swayamsevaks would be accepted.

The intensification of RSS control over the Jana Sangh was at the expense of the alliance plans of Madhok. His preferred option had in fact been automatically set aside, since any formula jeopardizing the identity of the party to which the Sangathanist network was closely attached had been ruled out.

The Primacy of the Organization over Individuals

In June 1972, Madhok publicly denounced—in the name of more liberal programme—the leftward drift of the party, which he blamed for its electoral reverses in 1971 and 1972.[61] He took up this argument again in February 1973 in a note which he presented before the party's executive committee at the start of the meeting at Kanpur, where he also took a stand against the control which

[56] W. Andersen and S. D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, op. cit., p. 182.

[57] When he became sarsanghchalak in 1973, Deoras made it clear that he did not consider the *varna* system worthy of emulation.

[58] S. S. Bhandari had been promoted to general secretary, while J. Joshi and N. Deshmukh, as well as Vajpayee, remained in their posts as national secretaries.

[59] W. Andersen and S. D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, op. cit., p. 180.

[60] *The Statesman* (Delhi), 30 July 1967.

[61] *The Times of India*, 7 June 1972.

the RSS exerted over the Jana Sangh and called for the party's internal workings to be made more democratic by the abolition of the sangathan mantries.[62] Advani, Vajpayee's successor as president of the Jana Sangh in 1973, described Madhok's attitude as characteristic indiscipline, and he was expelled from the party for a period of three years—which, in the event, proved permanent.[63]

Madhok was told that the reason he had been expelled was because of the dissenting views he had expressed publicly over the years (for example, over nationalization of the banks). Here Advani referred to the party's unwritten rules whereby discussion of matters over which a majority decision had already been taken was inadmissible. Furthermore, Advani accused Madhok of having an 'inflated ego'[64] which had caused him to push himself forward as an individual: the Jana Sangh had inherited from the RSS a concern to subordinate personalities to its organization.[65]

It seems that Madhok had never been completely accepted by the high command of the 'Sangh parivar'. Even today, senior swayamsevaks of the BJP will point out that he never completed his OTC course and that he achieved prominence because of his familiarity with the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which was an early and important focus of attention for Hindu nationalists in the post-independence period. In addition, he had been one of the first swayamsevaks to explore the idea of forming a new party and to discuss the idea with Mookerjee, even before the RSS leaders accepted it. By contrast, Advani was a product of the RSS. A swayamsevak since 1942, in 1947 he became pracharak of the Karachi branch where he developed numerous shakhas while simultaneously working as a teacher. After Partition, he served as a pracharak in the Alwar, Bharatpur, Kota, Bundi, and Jhalawar districts of Rajasthan until 1952 when he was appointed secretary for the state Jana Sangh in order to assist S. S. Bhandari, the general secretary. In 1957, Upadhayaya asked him to come to

[62] Note reproduced in Varshney, *Jana Sangh—RSS and Balraj Madhok*, op. cit., pp. 112–24.

[63] *Motherland*, 14 March 1973, pp. 1 and 7.

[64] *Organiser*, 17 March 1973, p. 13.

[65] At first, Madhok considered himself to be the victim of this principle more than of ideological disagreement (interview). It was precisely to avoid personality cults that the presidency of the party, which became a more important post after 1966, was rotated.

Delhi to look after parliamentary work when the session was on and in 1958 he became secretary and later vice-president of the Delhi unit of the Jana Sangh; after the 1967 elections he was leader of the city's metropolitan council. Parallel to this, from 1960 onwards, he assisted another Sindhi, K. R. Malkani, in editing the *Organizer*.[66] That he was imbued with the doctrines of Hindu nationalism was clearly evident in his articles. Even though he had become a member of the Jana Sangh's national executive in 1966 he had remained withdrawn from the national political scene till he became party president, at the suggestion of Vajpayee, in 1973. At that time the *Organizer* compared him to Upadhyaya[67] probably because he shunned publicity and was the incarnation of RSS ideology.

Madhok attracted no more than a handful of activists from the Jana Sangh, which was very surprising given that he had been one of the party's co-founders. His failure in dividing the party reflects the primacy of the organization over individuals; the Jana Sanghis did not owe allegiance to personalities but rather respected the authority of sangathan mantris as the embodiment of the organization. This arrangement explains the party's tight discipline and why it was largely free from factionalism, a phenomenon that rests primarily on allegiance towards personalities and clientelistic linkages.

The predominant type of leadership was rather that of a tightly bound élite sharing a common doctrine and sense of discipline learnt from the RSS. Debates were confined to private meetings and public differences between party chiefs were very rare. In fact, personalities did not count for much in comparison to the organization. Moreover the replacement in 1973 of Vajpayee by Advani was not the product of any kind of competition and nor did it imply any shift of emphasis in the political programme. The primacy of the organization over personalities also explains the influence of the local cadres—the backbone of the party—in shaping the party's programme. Therefore, one can state with confidence that the main division within the Jana Sangh was not vertical but horizontal. In the early 1970s, this division explains the preference for populism

[66] Interview with L. K. Advani, *Who's Who in Rajya Sabha—1970*, op. cit., p. 4 and G. Vazirani, *Lal Advani: The Man and his Mission* (New Delhi: Arnold, 1991), pp. 11–17.

[67] 'Second Deendayal at Helm of BJS', *Organiser*, 17 February 1973, p. 1.

and Sangathanism in comparison to Madhok's alternative. At that time, the populist line was also a better option than a militant Hindu conservatism of the type advocated by Madhok because the central government, reacting to increased inter-communal rioting, was actively re-affirming its secularist principles.

The Central Government's Fight against Communalism

Between 1954 and 1966 the average number of communal riots per annum was 70.2. This figure rose to 209 in 1967, 346 in 1968, 519 in 1969, and 521 in 1970. Hindu nationalists were alleged to have been involved in the three major communal riots of the 1967–70 period—at Ranchi, Ahmedabad, and Bhiwandi.[68]

The central government reacted to this renewal of violence by adopting a tougher attitude towards the Hindu nationalists, especially since a Home Ministry report revealed that the RSS had become the largest association of volunteers in the country.[69] In 1968, the National Integration Council was reconstituted and the ministry submitted to it a plan to prohibit 'communalist activities',[70] though this was never followed up. The Congressmen close to Indira Gandhi, such as Jagjivan Ram, meanwhile adopted the same anti-communalist stance as the Communists, with whom they had had frequent contact in the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee (SVC committee for the struggle against communalism).[71] In the summer of 1970, the SVC launched a petition for the banning of the RSS,[72] Indira Gandhi herself denounced the

[68] See *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Communal Disturbances—Ranchi–Hatia August 22–29, 1967*, 1968, pp. 10ff; *Report–Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Ahmedabad*, op. cit., p. 67; and D. P. Madan, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Communal Disturbances at Bhiwandi, Jalgaon and Mahad in May 1970*, vol. 1, pp. 163ff.

[69] This report noted 73,000 swayamsevaks in Maharashtra, 31,500 in Rajasthan, 29,000 in Madhya Pradesh, 20,000 in West Bengal, 18,800 in Bihar, 18,000 in Karnataka, 17,000 in Uttar Pradesh, 14,500 in Delhi, 13,700 in Andhra Pradesh, 9000 in Kerala and Punjab, 8600 in Gujarat, and 6000 in Haryana. See *The Statesman Weekly*, 6 September 1969, p. 3.

[70] Ibid., 15 June 1968.

[71] Ibid., 30 May 1970, p. 7.

[72] *National Herald*, 20 July 1970.

fascism of the Jana Sangh, whose appeal for the Indianization of the minorities she compared to that of Hitler's persecution of the Jews.[73] She asked Y. B. Chavan, the home minister, who had accused the Jana Sangh of involvement in the riots at Ahmedabad,[74] to sound out the state governments on the possibility of banning the RSS. A majority of states believed that such a measure would risk triggering off a mobilization of the RSS and its sympathizers, as had happened in 1949. The Congress leadership in the states, however, argued that prompt action was called for.[75] Indira Gandhi finally ordered a stricter implementation of the existing laws: thus in Delhi there was enacted a two-month ban on the 'practice of physical exercises, in uniform or without it, with or without *lathis* or any other weapon, or objects resembling one, by a group of five or more persons in a public place';[76] furthermore, it was announced that police files on 'functionaries and active members of the RSS would be reexamined and appropriate measures taken'.[77]

The RSS attempted to resist this vigilant secularism by instructing Hans Raj Gupta to organize a petition for submission to the president of India; 400,000 signatures were collected protesting against the ban on the Delhi shakhas. In 1972 a Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill was introduced which gave the government new means of combating communalist and regionalist paramilitary organizations. Aware that the implementation of this bill could weaken the position of the RSS, the Jana Sangh opposed it in parliament, but the measure was passed into law.[78]

Partly as a result of these events, the Jana Sangh opted for a low profile, eschewing any Hindu militancy. In adopting the Vajpayee

[73] Ibid., 15 January 1970; see also *The Statesman Weekly*, 16 May 1970, p. 1, and *The Hindustan Times*, 25 November 1970.

[74] *The Statesman Weekly*, 11 October 1969, p. 7.

[75] *The Times of India*, 23 June 1970.

[76] Ibid., 26 June 1970.

[77] *National Herald*, 11 July 1970. The list of Indira Gandhi's recommendations to the heads of the state governments included the imposition of fines, a closer watch on communalist meetings, sanctions against civil servants who proved ineffective in the fight against communalism, and the development of a network of informers. See *The Statesman Weekly*, 6 June 1970, p. 10. Significantly, the executive committee of Congress(O) took no part in this campaign (ibid., 27 June 1970, p. 2).

[78] *The Statesman Weekly*, 10 June 1972, p. 6.

formula—distancing the party from Hindu communal themes—it once again showed how its actions were influenced by the context of the political arena. When Upadhyaya was mysteriously assassinated in February 1968, Vajpayee succeeded him as president of the Jana Sangh. His re-election during the period 1969–72 allowed him to set in train his populist strategy. Claiming that it represented the people, the Jana Sangh, with its eye increasingly on future electoral success, began to promise social reforms that were often unrealistic.

The BJP: Heir to the Janata Party?

On 5 April 1980 the ex-Jana Sanghis inaugurated a new party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which saw itself as the Janata Party's heir. Vajpayee—the BJP president—explained that the ex-Jana Sanghis could claim this special relationship because of the exemplary way they had conducted themselves while a part of the Janata Party, where their attachment to the values of the 'JP movement' took pride of place.[79] This new move by the Hindu nationalists was aimed primarily at widening its base.

For Vajpayee it was imperative above all to avoid any comparison with the Jana Sangh, which had been condemned to an existence on the very fringes of mainstream politics.[80] In this spirit the BJP welcomed Janata Party leaders who had no previous association with Hindu nationalism, like Ram Jethmalani, a well-known Bombay lawyer who had become a member of parliament (MP) for the first time in 1977; Shanti Bhushan, once Morarji Desai's Minister of Justice; and Sikander Bakht, also a former Janata minister and one-time leader of Congress(O).[81] Jethmalani and Bakht were appointed vice-presidents of the BJP—along with Vijaya Raje Scindia, L. K. Advani, and Murli Manohar Joshi—and given the task, together with S. S. Bhandari, of writing the party's constitution.[82] This opening up of the BJP was confirmed at the party's first plenary meeting in Bombay in December

[79] *The Hindustan Times*, 7 April 1980.

[80] *The Times of India*, 6 April 1980.

[81] This was a sign of the ideological dilution affecting the Hindu nationalists. In 1952, Bakht's marriage to a younger Hindu woman was greeted with strong protests of an anti-Muslim character from the RSS camp (*Organiser*, 19 February 1952, p. 1).

[82] *The Times of India*, 7 April 1980.

1980, when a former Supreme Court judge, K. S. Hegde,[83] who had served as Chairman of the Lok Sangharsh Samiti for Karnataka during the 'JP movement' and as Speaker of the Lok Sabha in 1977–9, was appointed vice-president of the party in place of Ądvani, who now became one of its four general secretaries.

As well as co-opting some of its leading political figures, the BJP also claimed a part of Janata's programme. At a constituent conference in April 1980, its leaders announced that their electoral manifesto for the Vidhan Sabha elections, scheduled by Indira Gandhi for the coming June, would be none other than that of the Janata Party of 1977. This decision was confirmed at the meeting in Bombay when Vajpayee proposed as the party's creed 'Gandhian socialism' and 'positive secularism'. He went to great lengths to present the former as a cooperative third path that was particularly close to the Jana Sanghi tradition because of its decentralizing and social reformist implications.[84] As for the latter, Vajpayee emphasized that it was different from Congress secularism, which he claimed was biased in favour of minorities in order to create 'vote banks'.

This attempt to appropriate the Gandhian message of the Janata found expression in the party's constitution, where the word 'Hindu' did not make a single appearance. The only discernible reference to the old Jana Sangh creed was to Upadhyaya's 'integral humanism', which was used as the heading under which the party's 'five Commitments' were set out.[85] This, it was explained, was insofar as 'decentralized economy, integral humanism and Gandhian socialism are all manifestations of one and the same continuing theme'.[86]

In addition, the BJP wanted to distance itself from the former Jana Sangh through its actions rather than its defining principles.

[83] In 1973, K. S. Hegde had been one of the three judges of the Supreme Court entitled to become Chief Justice. He was bypassed by Indira Gandhi because he had pronounced against the government, and subsequently resigned.

[84] A. B. Vajpayee, *India at the Crossroads* (New Delhi: BJP Publication, 1981), pp. 3–5.

[85] *BJP Constitution and Rules* (New Delhi: BJP Publication, 1981), p. 1. Apart from 'Gandhian socialism', and 'positive secularism', these were 'nationalism' and 'national integration', 'democracy', and 'value-based politics'. See *Our Five Commitments* (New Delhi: BJP Publication, 1981), pp. 3–5.

[86] *Economic Policy Statement* (New Delhi: BJP Publication, 1986), pp. 2–3.

In July 1980, Jethmalani, with the active support of S. Bakht, introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha that would once again legalize religious conversion. His justification for this initiative was the need to dispel anxieties engendered by O. P. Tyagi's Freedom of Religion Bill and to give credibility to the secularist image that the BJP wanted to promote.[87] In the same spirit, the party suspended Dina Nath Pandey's BJP membership (he had been re-elected as MLA for Jamshedpur on the BJP ticket) after he was implicated in the report of the commission of inquiry into the Jamshedpur riot.[88] In its efforts to distance itself from the Jana Sangh, the BJP moved towards a recognition of the composite character of the Indian nation. The party's Lok Sabha election manifesto of 1984 contained the following: 'Unity in diversity has been the hallmark of Indian culture, which is a unique, multi-hued synthesis of the cultural contributions made over the centuries by different peoples and religions'.[89]

Simultaneously, socio-economic issues were highlighted in a manner which recalled the populism of the Jana Sangh in the 1970s.[90] Campaigns were launched on themes such as inflation and corruption in October 1981.[91] After the electoral setbacks of 1983, which are discussed below, the party turned its attention to a more constructive programme of action. Vajpayee proposed to the National Council (the equivalent of the Jana Sangh's AIGC) that it should exploit the gaps in the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) launched by Indira Gandhi's government and do so in the framework of a welfare policy that had always been one of the Hindu nationalists' strong points. Peasants were to be helped in their dealings with the administration (to seek loans from local agencies, for instance) and, above all, corruption would be denounced at the local level. As Vajpayee explained:

[87] *Patriot*, 31 July 1980, and *Nagpur Times*, 3 August 1980.

[88] *The Tribune*, 16 September 1981. Soon afterwards Pandey was exonerated of any charge, a decision greeted with a burst of publicity in the *Organiser* (28 October 1981, p. 16).

[89] Cited in K. Choudhary, 'BJP's Changing View of Hindu–Muslim Relations', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 17 August 1991), p. 1901.

[90] *Resolution on the Economic Situation* (Cochin: BJP National Council, 25 April 1981), pp. 5–6.

[91] *The Indian Express*, 11 and 13 October 1981.

It is hardly necessary to spell out the impact the BJP will make on the hearts and minds of the rural people if the BJP goes to the villages and declares that now that we are here, we would like to see which corrupt official tries to exploit these helpless people or harass them if they do not pay the demanded bribe. Any party, which takes up such a programme and honestly implements it, will surely win the goodwill and trust of the rural masses and they will surely identify themselves with it.[92]

After the setbacks they had suffered through participating in the Janata Party, the founders of the BJP decided that they would never amalgamate with another party. In the long term, this choice involved making the BJP an alternative to Congress but it did not exclude the possibility of forging alliances, which, in fact, was an aspect of the party's effort to present a more open image.[93] This tactic, spurred forward by Vajpayee, took shape especially in the run-up to the general elections of 1984, during which he called on 'all the nationalist democratic forces in the country to heed the call of the hour [and] to accept our hand of friendship extended for the pursuit of a united national effort'.[94]

Charan Singh, who was as keen as ever to knit together an opposition which he could lead, responded positively to this appeal to form a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) devoid of any particular ideological slant.[95] Meanwhile, on the eve of the 1984 elections, he decided to dissolve his Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) in order to form a new party oriented more towards the peasants' interests—thus justifying the annulment of his agreement with the BJP. The latter investigated the possibility of collaborating with the Janata Party, but this could go on further than *ad hoc* electoral pacts. Now bereft of allies, it was all the more vulnerable in the face of the wave of sympathy which followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards on 31 October 1984. In December 1984, Indira's son Rajiv Gandhi won a parliamentary majority greater than any obtained by Congress hitherto (415 in

[92] *Presidential Address by Sri A. B. Vajpayee*, BJP 4th National Council Session, New Delhi, 15–17 April 1983. See details of the resolution in *Organiser*, 22 May 1983, p. 16.

[93] Interview with K. L. Sharma, 23 November 1989, New Delhi. On this line of conduct, see the resolutions passed by the National Executive in early 1982 (*Organiser*, 28 February 1982, p. 8).

[94] *Presidential Address by Sri A. B. Vajpayee*, op. cit., p. 9.

[95] See text of the agreement in *Organiser*, 21 August 1983, p. 5.

a house of 542); the BJP, though coming second in terms of votes (7.4 per cent), gained only two seats. Then, in March 1985, when Vidhan Sabha elections were organized in the eleven states where the previous election had taken place in April 1980, overall the BJP suffered a reverse, its total number of seats falling from 198 to 169.

In the mid-1980s the party seemed to have reached an impasse. The tactic of openness, intended to make it the heir to Janata and thus an alternative to Congress by virtue of a socio-economic 'people-oriented' programme, had not enabled it to enlarge its base, and its policy of making alliances had misfired. In addition, such openness had risked demobilizing the local cadres and alienating the RSS's hierarchy without attracting many new recruits.

Risks of Divorce from the Grassroots and the RSS

The ex-Jana Sanghis had withdrawn from the Janata Party partly in response to the demands of local cadres and activists, of whose discontent Advani and Bhandari had become well aware in the course of a national tour in February 1980.[96] But the BJP did not reflect either their ideology or their style of political action. At the party's first plenary session in Bombay, numerous delegates made no secret of their reservations. Vijaya Raje Scindia was one who spoke for this group: she circulated a note challenging the validity of 'Gandhian socialism' as one of the party's articles of faith, because in her eyes the concept of 'integral humanism' incorporated elements of social harmony (such as the extended family and the veneration of the old) that the word 'socialism', with its notion of class conflicts and its materialist connotations, lacked. And, above all, 'Gandhian socialism' represented a contradiction in terms, since 'socialism' related it to the state, whereas the message of Gandhi was one that concerned decentralization and rural self-sufficiency.[97]

In Bombay, Rajmata Scindia's interpretation was well received by many delegates. The BJP's secretary in Madhya Pradesh, Kailash Sarang, spontaneously and outspokenly expressed the hostility of

[96] W. Andersen and S. D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, op. cit., p. 224.

[97] Interview with V. R. Scindia, 1 September 1987, New Delhi and *The Hindustan Times*, 27 December 1980.

the activists in his state to the concept of 'Gandhian socialism'.[98] (And, as at the last plenary meeting of the Jana Sangh, in 1975, the delegates from Madhya Pradesh were the most numerous of all, after those of the state where the meeting was held.[99]) Altogether, 257 amendments to the resolution on 'Gandhian socialism' were tabled, but the leadership made no concessions of any substance. Only five delegates out of more than 50,000 defied party discipline and voted against it.[100]

As well as its diluted ideology, local and regional cadres were perturbed by the BJP's institutional framework, which seemed to have incorporated many features of the Janata Party's organization. The post of sangathan mantri disappeared; henceforth power was to be concentrated, below national level, in the party presidents of the different states. However, these presidents were often former sangathan mantris,[101] and the BJP continued to rely largely on the Sangathanist network, as the case of Madhya Pradesh makes clear.

The BJP between Integration and Mobilization: The Success of a Mixed Strategy

The defeat of the BJP in the 1984 and 1985 elections had already led to the tactic of openness adopted in 1980 being questioned. Its National Executive meeting in mid-March 1985 with Vajpayee in the chair, set up a working group to investigate, through interviews with party activists, the causes of the defeat and prepare a five-year plan of action. This revealed the strength of RSS culture among party cadres.

[98] *The Nagpur Times*, 30 December 1980, and *National Herald*, 28 January 1980. A senior leader from Madhya Pradesh said of Vajpayee: 'He created confusion in the minds of the old workers by adopting Gandhian Socialism' (interview with Shejwalkar).

[99] In Bombay, the largest number of delegates (7900) was from Madhya Pradesh, and the second largest (4750) from Rajasthan out of a total of 54,632 (*Organiser*, 11 January 1981, p. 2). In 1975, there were 5214 from Madhya Pradesh (compared to 5026 from Uttar Pradesh), out of about 40,000 (ibid., 8 March 1975, p. 16).

[100] *The Hindustan Times*, 31 December 1980.

[101] Ibid., 8 April 1980.

The Reinstatement of the Sangathanists

The 'grassroots' in fact disapproved of the quest for alliances, which suggested that the party was ill-equipped to make the most of its chances alone.[102] On the basis of this enquiry, the working group proposed a plan which rehabilitated the basic characteristics of the Jana Sangh: the appointment of a single general secretary at the national level and in each state, and of an organizing secretary with responsibility for each district—a role strongly reminiscent of the sangathan mantri. The general secretaries were to become national secretaries in charge either of a particular portfolio or of a geographical area.

The working group's report was presented to the National Executive on 20 July 1985, and the leading figures in the party generally agreed to its recommendations. Advani became the party's sole general secretary, which recalled the Jana Sangh's practice of having only one such officeholder. And like Upadhyaya in the 1950s and 1960s, he was seen to have the confidence of the RSS; in May 1986, he became party president. Advani appointed three veteran RSS men to the posts of general secretary: K. N. Sahni (a member of the RSS since the 1940s and a pracharak in Kashmir before Partition and in Punjab—his home state—between 1949 and 1953);[103] M. M. Joshi (a lecturer in physics at the University of Allahabad and a pracharak who had been elected to the Lok Sabha for the first and only time in 1977); and Krishna Lal Sharma (a member of the RSS since 1942 and a pracharak from 1946 onwards). The vice-presidential functions remained, but alongside S. Bakht and Vijaya Raje Scindia others with an RSS

[102] BJP, *Working Group Report* (New Delhi: BJP Central Office, 1985), and interview with K. L. Sharma (coordinator of this working group). Where symbols were concerned, the activists were in favour of a return to Upadhyaya's slogan, 'Integral Humanism', which by implication condemned the Gandhian socialism imposed by the party leaders in 1980. Integral Humanism was at once accepted in July 1985 as the party's fundamental philosophy, along with a resolution on economic policy reflecting a 'Gandhian approach'. In October 1985 the National Council ratified this change after a debate lasting several hours, at the end of which Gandhian Socialism was none the less maintained. At the end of 1986, Integral Humanism was written into the party's constitution.

[103] Interview with K. N. Sahni, 11 August 1992, New Delhi.

background were appointed, such as K. Thakre and S. S. Bhandari who, following the working group's recommendations, undertook tours in order to build up the membership, the structure of the party, and grassroots ideological training through study camps.[104] In 1988 the representation of the RSS in the top levels of the BJP was bolstered by the appointment of K. N. Govindacharya to the new post of political secretary of the BJP president.

Meanwhile Advani's speeches were becoming more militant in tone. In his address to the 8th plenary session of the BJP in May 1986, he called for a ban on cow slaughter, a uniform civil code, and the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution,[105] thus returning to issues which had been exploited by the Jana Sangh but which the BJP had at first neglected. In January 1987, in an address to the BJP's National Council in Vijayawada, he referred ominously to the 'dangers of minorityism' and 'pseudo-secularism' in an obvious allusion to the Congress government's concern to protect certain interests of the minorities, as exemplified in the Shah Bano affair.[106] At the National Executive meeting in April 1987, K. L. Sharma and Y. Rajpal presented two reports, respectively on 'Implementation of action plan' and 'Election strategy', which both argued that the BJP should contest the next elections on its own.[107] The leadership of the party was at last evolving the line demanded by the grassroots, and it is evident that this shift in strategy was a reflection not of a change of balance between contending groups within the leadership but of sustained pressure from the party's local cadres.[108]

Although many press reports suggested that the replacement of Vajpayee by Advani represented the eclipse of a liberal tendency by one which was more hardline and militant, the reality was much more complex. The two leaders differed from each other

[104] BJP, *National Executive Meeting*, 24–6 July 1987, New Delhi, p. 29.

[105] *L. K. Advani Presidential Address*, 8th plenary session, New Delhi, 9 May 1986, pp. 5, 6 and 9.

[106] *L. K. Advani Presidential Address*, 9th National Council session, Vijayawada, 2–4 January 1987, pp. 8–9.

[107] BJP, *National Executive Meeting*, 17–19 April 1987, Rohtak.

[108] In its plea, Rajpal referred to the local cadres in revealing terms: 'The grim reality is that there is no alternative to fighting alone if we want to perform our duty towards the nation, to our party and to our workers' (ibid., p. 31).

in some respects but they did not represent opposed groups or even ideological tendencies. (Interestingly, the expression 'pseudo-secularism' was first used by Vajpayee as early as 1969.)[109] Advani and Vajpayee had worked together within the Jana Sangh and subsequently within the BJP without serious disagreement. As the first president of the BJP, Vajpayee had been responsible for the tactic of openness and the emphasis on 'Gandhian socialism' but Advani—then general secretary—had also favoured this approach. The discussions which led to the BJP's change of strategy had actually begun in 1985, under Vajpayee's presidency. What lay behind this strategic reorientation were the setbacks which the BJP had suffered in the 1984 and 1985 elections and the subsequent pressures from the RSS and the party's local cadres to reaffirm the Sangathanist style of party organization and activity. Once more, the main division within the BJP was not vertical but horizontal.

This development allowed for an understanding between the BJP and the RSS, whose leaders might not have put direct pressure on the party but had let it be known that they disapproved of its conduct. From mid-1985 the party's leading figures once again participated in the annual Pratinidhi Sabha (Representative Assembly) that brings together the all-India leaders of the affiliates of the RSS in Nagpur,[110] while BJP cadres participated in the coordination committees (*Samanvaya Samitis*) in which the other affiliates of the RSS had been represented since 1977 at the state level and to which they had never before been invited.[111] This re-integration into the body of the 'RSS complex', on the model of the relations which had existed in the Jana Sangh phase, was illlustrated in October 1987 by a five-day meeting at Nagpur to review the questions of the moment, including Ayodhya. Among those who attended were the leaders of the RSS (Deoras, Seshadri, Rajendra Singh, and Yadav Rao Joshi), the BMS (Thengadi and M. Mehta), the Deendayal Research Institute (Deshmukh and Malkani),

[109] A. B. Vajpayee, 'The Bane of Pseudo-secularism', in S. S. Bhandari (ed.), *Jana Sangh Souvenir*, op. cit., pp. 55–8.

[110] K. Chandra, 'Inside the Bharatiya Janata Party: Political Actors and Ideological Choices', paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies, Boston, MA, 24–6 March, 1994, p. 60.

[111] W. Andersen and S. D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron*, op. cit., p. 143.

the ABVP (A. Modak), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (Singhal), and the BJP (Vajpayee and Advani). The theme was eminently political since one of the meeting's conclusions was that:

> The political perversion of pampering and aggravating the 'minority complex' threatening the very fabric of nation's unity and its ethos, can be cured only by an enlightened Hindu electorate.[112]

Clearly the BJP had a leading role to play. This development helped to remobilize the energies of the party's activists but once again highlighted the persistent dilemma of choosing between fidelity to RSS culture on the one hand, with the attendant risk that the BJP would again become isolated, and, on the other hand, of diluting Hindu nationalist identity, which would alienate the party from the RSS, as had happened in the recent past. In a sense, it was a question of combining the strategies of integration and of ethno-religious mobilization within a new 'mixed strategy'. The BJP was helped in this undertaking by the attitude of the other opposition parties.

An Accommodating 'Legitimate Opposition'

The approach of the elections was probably the principal factor that led the BJP's leaders to reject a return to the spirit of the Jana Sangh for fear of narrowing the party's base and appearing too radical to its potential allies. At the National Council meeting in January 1988, Vajpayee made the most of the fact that 15 of the party's 17 candidates elected to the Vidhan Sabha in Haryana in 1987 had won thanks to the electoral alliance with the Lok Dal of Devi Lal.[113] He was opposed by proponents of a re-invigorated Hindu nationalism, who were represented principally by recruits from the ranks of sangathan mantris, like K. Thakre, and by party

[112] *Organiser*, 29 November 1987, p. 6. Shortly before this, Seshadri had reaffirmed the RSS's objective of seeking actively to build up a 'Hindu vote bank': 'The Muslim leadership till today have had the final laugh with the trump card of block votes in their hands. But now an entirely new and unexpected factor has emerged on the electoral front and that is the "*Brahmastra*" [an invincible or divine weapon] of Hindu vote.... Evidently time is ripe on the political front for rousing the Hindu society to call the secular bluff of the so-called secular parties on the one hand and that of the so-called minority pressure groups on the other. (Ibid., 19 July 1987, p. 9).

[113] *The Statesman* (Delhi), 4 January 1988.

dignitaries close to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), like Rajmata Scindia. Finally a compromise solution was reached which combined both the instrumentalist strategy and populist agitation: there would be campaigns to liberate the Ramjanmboomi in the most suitable areas along with a national movement to improve the lot of the peasants.[114] By following these two paths simultaneously, the party sought to draw closer to the RSS without becoming alienated from its potential allies.

The opposition's most effective politician was Vishwanath Pratap Singh, a former minister in Rajiv Gandhi's government who resigned in 1987 and then mounted a campaign against the prime minister, who was accused of corruption in the Bofors affair.[115] Singh's new party, the Janata Dal (People's Party), was intended to become the rallying-point of a coalition which would overturn Congress. It included the Jan Morcha—V. P. Singh's original party, run by Congressmen who had followed him into opposition—and the main factions of the Lok Dal (those of Devi Lal and Ajit Singh, the son of Charan Singh). In 1987 V. P. Singh described the Communists as 'natural allies', but in September that year Devi Lal, who had become chief minister of Haryana with BJP support, called a meeting that was intended to seal the unity of all the opposition parties. The BJP was invited, and attended in the hope of being able to become integrated with the new alternative politics now being germinated.[116] As a result, the Communists boycotted the meeting and more or less demanded that V. P. Singh choose between them and the BJP.

The only way out for the BJP, which could not risk complete isolation in the aftermath of its 1984 electoral debacle, was to prove to V. P. Singh how strong it was, and to do so by means of actions free of any communalist connotations. This was probably why, far from respecting the compromise reached by the National Council in January 1988 (which was already unravelling), the party concentrated on socio-economic themes at the expense of ethno-religious

[114] Ibid., 5 January 1988.

[115] It was alleged that substantial bribes were paid to close associates of Rajiv Gandhi, in 1986, by the Swedish arms manufacturer Bofors, in order to obtain a contract for the sale of artillery to the Indian army.

[116] BJP, *Resolutions Adopted at the Plenary Session*, 8–10 April 1988, Agra, p. 18.

mobilization. The cancellation of debts owed by peasants to public authorities and cooperatives was given the highest priority.[117]

Meanwhile in August 1988 the BJP was excluded from negotiations held to discuss the formation of a National Front, which in October finally comprised the Janata Dal and four regional parties. At a gathering in Ahmedabad the BJP announced, to the satisfaction of the RSS, that it would fight the election alone.[118] For tactical reasons the National Front did not really change its attitude till the turn of 1988–9 when the BJP scored an unquestionable success in local elections in Uttar Pradesh. The party set about making these elections into an event of national importance. Both Advani and Vajpayee had taken part in the campaign and only the BJP put up candidates on its own ticket, while other groups supported independent candidates.[119] Its agitation on behalf of peasants undoubtedly contributed to its success, and furthermore demonstrated to V. P. Singh how indispensable the BJP was as an electoral ally. In fact, Uttar Pradesh was where the Janata Dal hoped to score its greatest number of victories in the coming general elections (as the most populous state in the Union, it provided 85 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha).[120]

[117] Ibid., pp. 9–11. In Uttar Pradesh the BJP abandoned an agitation for the 'liberation of the Ram temple'—from which its regional leader, Kalyan Singh, had expected to boost his popularity—to concentrate on the 'defence of the peasants'.

[118] *Organiser*, 23 October 1988, p. 1. Deoras had declared shortly before that the RSS felt itself closer to the BJP than to any other party. Thus *Organiser's* front-page headline was 'RSS-Chief backs BJP' (16 October 1988).

[119] S. Nihal Singh, *Count Down to Elections* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1989), pp. 125 and 196. The BJP won 120 of the 404 seats on the municipal corporations of the six biggest towns in the state. It increased the number of its representatives from 28 to 94 in district capitals and to 75 against 27 for Congress-I in the municipal councils of the smaller towns (*India Today*, 15 February 1989, pp. 51–2).

[120] In an interview published in 1989 Advani showed that he was fully aware of the impact of the local elections in Uttar Pradesh: 'The feeling had taken roots in the party that VP [Singh] doesn't like us but wants to use us. But he must realize that even in the regions and areas of his interest we cannot be brushed aside. We are there' (ibid., p. 37). Soon after the Uttar Pradesh elections Advani's tone became more explicit. After once again recalling the success of the BJP in the municipal elections in Uttar Pradesh, he commented: 'In more than 425 Lok Sabha seats of this country the Communist Parties just

In May 1989, V. P. Singh began negotiations with the BJP which concluded positively in the sharing of seats in North India. [121] Then, in June, the BJP took a further step towards joining the mainstream opposition by taking part in the mass resignation of all opposition deputies in protest at Rajiv Gandhi's implication in the Bofors affair. Among the CPI(M) leaders, E. M. S. Namboodiripad was opposed to this kind of co-operation with the BJP but Jyoti Basu, chief minister of West Bengal, went along with it.[122] With this movement, driven along by V. P. Singh, the Communists seized on a chance to implant themselves outside their strongholds in Bengal and Kerala and overturn the Congress-I at the Centre. Thus V. P. Singh persuaded the Communists to accept the company of the BJP, notably on a 'Save India Day' (9 August) and during the Bharat Bandh (All India Strike) of 30 August which really launched the election campaign.

On 25 October, negotiations concerning seat adjustments were held between the BJP and the Janata Dal.[123] The number of

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do not matter. It is surprising that nevertheless they keep trying to dictate to other parties what they should do or not do. It is high time the Communist bluff is called' (BJP *National Executive Meeting*, 3–5 March 1989, Udaipur, p. 3).

[121] *India Today*, 30 June 1989, p. 18.

[122] Ibid., 15 August 1989, p. 18.

[123] According to L. K. Advani, V. P. Singh had a survey conducted in Uttar Pradesh which showed that if the Janata Dal and the BJP did not have a seat adjustment the Congress-I would win in a majority of the constituencies. Advani has also claimed that he met with V. P. Singh and Bhaurao Deoras after the Bombay session of the BJP in September 1989 and that he told Singh: 'If the Congress is ousted, you are going to be the Prime Minister because yours will be the largest party and mine will be the second party. If there is adjustment between us, may be mine will be the largest party and yours would be then the second party and Congress would get a clear majority.... It is to you to make a decision but if you think that we will change our stand on Ayodhya, on Article 370 or on the uniform civil code issue, or on the Urdu issue, you are mistaken.... We have already made an adjustment with the Shiv Sena. [See below]. It may not suit you but it is done'. (Interview with L. K. Advani, 11 February 1994, New Delhi). Although I have not been able to cross-check this account with other testimony, the terms of Advani's description of this exchange of views can be taken as evidence of his concern to ensure that the pursuit of a strategy of integration with the opposition did not oblige the BJP to dilute its Hindu nationalist identity.

constituencies where the risk of confrontation between the two parties was staved off finally reached 350, out of a total of 543, the BJP contesting 226. In the Hindi-speaking north, the Janata Dal and the BJP fought each other in only 39 seats out of 216—18 in Uttar Pradesh, 8 in Bihar, 5 in Rajasthan, 4 in Madhya Pradesh, and one each in Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, and Chandigarh. Paul Brass has emphasized that in Uttar Pradesh the BJP 'depended heavily for its victories upon the absence of the Janata Dal';[124] it won 5 seats in the 10 constituencies where it had a pact, and only 2 in the 17 where the two parties were opposing each other. As well as its 'mechanical' advantage, the pact was also of value in that it allowed the BJP to feature in an alternative coalition to the Congress-I and profit from the wave of hostility to the government fostered by V. P. Singh's campaigns against corruption in the highest echelons of the state.

The mainstream opposition finally set aside the secularist principles which its leader V. P. Singh stood for in order to benefit from, or at least not be harmed by, the strength of the BJP. Before making the pact V. P. Singh had demanded that the BJP clarify its position on the issue of Ayodhya, but when the party evaded this injunction, the only sanction that V. P. Singh imposed was his refusal to take part in joint election meetings.[125] The BJP barely protested; whereas in the 1970s the Hindu nationalists wished to be publicly associated with 'JP' in order to gain a new respectability and thus soften its Hindu communalist image, in 1989 the party was now fundamentally Hindu nationalist in orientation. This strategy of the BJP, combining a desire for integration in the legitimate opposition and efforts to mobilize militant Hinduism, reproduced the situation of 1967, when the Jana Sangh first became an electoral force to be reckoned with. This return to the political culture of the Jana Sangh was done discreetly so as not to jeopardize an electoral pact now regarded as essential after the disaster of 1984. However, once the principle of the pact had been agreed, the BJP, far from energetically seeking integration within the opposition, set out to make electoral capital from the 'Hindu revival'.

[124] P. Brass, 'Caste, Class and Community in the Ninth General Elections for the Lok Sabha in Uttar Pradesh', in H. A. Gould and S. Ganguly (eds), *India Votes* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 109

[125] *The Indian Express*, 14 November 1989, p. 6.

The BJP is Won Over to the Strategy of Ethno-religious Mobilization

At first the BJP's reaffirmation of its Hindu militancy was not expressed in the public arena but only internally. Apparently the party needed to give a guarantee of good conduct to the RSS, which was seeking a political arm, without endangering its relationship with the rest of the opposition. For three years it had been putting down roots in the Hindu nationalist camp, and this was confirmed during celebrations commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Hedgewar, which lasted from the autumn of 1988 till 6 April 1989. When inaugurating the celebrations in Bombay on 29 September 1988, Advani declared: 'We will march ahead in cooperation with those who support the cause [of Ram] and without bothering about the opposition from some quarters.'[126]

A division of labour then took shape between Advani and Vajpayee, who presented a more moderate face of Hindu nationalism. Invited by Buta Singh to a meeting of the National Integration Council in May 1989, the latter proposed a compromise whereby both Hindus and Muslims would be encouraged to build their own places of worship on a site big enough to make such cohabitation feasible. Furthermore, he denied that the BJP was rejecting in advance any judicial settlement, while nevertheless acknowledging that it would be difficult to gain acceptance for this.[127] But in June, the National Council of Palampur (in Himachal Pradesh) voted for the following resolution:

> The BJP holds that the nature of this controversy is such that it just cannot be sorted out by a court of law.... The BJP calls upon the Rajiv Government to adopt the same positive approach in respect of Ayodhya that the Nehru government did with respect to Somnath. The sentiments of the people must be respected, and Ram Janamsthan [Ram's birthplace]

[126] *Organiser*, 30 October 1988, p. 13. Shortly before, Advani declared at the BJP's annual meeting that the 'Constitution makers never intended a secular state to mean either an irreligious state or a state that would disown the nation's ancient heritage only because it was Hindu' (*Presidential Address—Fourth Plenary Session*, Agra, 8 April 1988, p. 18).

[127] *The Hindustan Times*, 16 and 17 May 1989.

handed over to the Hindus—if possible through a negotiated settlement, or else, by legislation. Litigation certainly is no answer.[128]

For Advani the Palampur session was 'a milestone' because the BJP's alliance with the Shiv Sena and the party's position on the Ayodhya affair were 'finalized' there.[129] Regarding the Ayodhya affair, for the BJP the decision would find expression in an alignment of the positions of the RSS and the VHP. At the same time the RSS—in the person of K. C. Sudarshan, its chief ideologue (*baudhik pramukh*)—congratulated itself on having gained the upper hand in the BJP, which it regarded, in the long term, as an alternative to the Congress-I.[130]

At the top level of the party the political exploitation of the Ayodhya issue was always done discreetly, essentially to avoid upsetting its new allies. Except for its preamble, the party's election manifesto did not contain a single word about Ayodhya. It was regionally and locally that the instrumentalist strategy based on the manipulation of Hindu symbols was most obviously put into effect.

[128] BJP, *National Executive Meeting—Resolutions*, 9–11 June, 1989, Palampur, pp. 14–17.

[129] Interview with L. K. Advani.

[130] *India Today*, 30 June 1989, p. 41.

7

Anatomy of BJP's Rise to Power: Social, Regional and Political Expansion in 1990s[+]

OLIVER HEATH*

The spectacular rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is one of the major political stories of the 1990s. During the last decade the party has undergone a rapid geographical and political expansion, the like of which has never been seen before. From its lowly position in 1989, when the BJP was a small localized party with a political presence restricted to just a few states in the Hindi heartland, the acquisition of new territory and new allies has transformed it into being the main political force in India with a mass national following. The aim of this paper is to explore the effect that these expansions have had on the social base of the BJP. Has its appeal widened to attract voters from different social backgrounds? Or has it merely strengthened its hold on its traditional support base? Do the allies give the party an entrance into new states and new sections of society? These are some of the questions which need to be answered.

National aggregations provide a useful starting point from which to carry out our investigation. By looking at the overall picture we can gain a sense of what, if anything, has changed. However, the BJP's rise in popularity has not been evenly spread across the

[+] *Economic and Political Weekly*, vols XXXIV, XXXV, nos 34 & 35, 21–27/ 28 August–3 September 1999.

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country. The regional expansion of the party can be seen to have taken shape in three distinct waves. The first wave took place in the 1950s and early 1960s when the BJP's historical predecessor, the Jana Sangh, first became a significant political force at the state level. These 'primary' states are the states where the Jana Sangh emerged as a viable opposition party in the 1950s and 1960s. The second wave includes the 'secondary' states, where the Jana Sangh, and then after 1980 the BJP, were present before the 1989 boom, but were only minor opposition, winning just a few seats in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The third wave is marked by the 1989 election, when the BJP emerged as a force in many of the 'tertiary' states. By looking at the social expansion with reference to these different levels of regional expansion, an attempt can be made to identify the forces that lie behind the party's emergence as a national party.

Social Base

It is well known that support for the BJP has tended to be more concentrated among the upper castes and the wealthy, and is weakest among the Muslims and the underprivileged. But how do these different sources of support compare? Is caste a more significant factor than class? How much of a role do age and gender play? It is important to answer these questions so that we have a reference point to relate social expansion to.

Bivariate analyses may to some considerable extent duplicate the significance of these factors. For example, educational level is closely related to social class, therefore, education and class tables may simply be redescribing the same phenomena rather than telling us anything new. What is interesting is to examine the impact of one variable on the vote for BJP and its allies (BJP+), controlling for the other variables. In other words, among people of the same community or class, does education still make a difference to the way people vote?

To explore this question a multivariate logistic regression, in which community, class, education, and so on are simultaneously included, rather than looked at separately, is carried out here. Logistic regression is used, it being the appropriate technique when there is a binary dependent variable.

The model includes community, class, education, age, gender, and locality. These variables are all treated in exactly the same

way as in cross-tabulations, but all are included simultaneously. Table 7.1 shows the parameter estimates. These estimates can be interpreted as fitted log odds ratios. If we exponentiate them, we obtain the usual odds ratios which are more easily interpreted. These are the ones shown in the second of the split columns. These odds ratios show the fitted odds of supporting the BJP and its allies in the particular groups in question relative to the overall odds. These are what is known as 'deviation contrasts'. If the fitted odds ratio is greater than 1, this indicates that the group in question is relatively likely to support BJP+, while if the odds ratio is less than one, it indicates that that group is relatively unlikely to support BJP+.[1]

The magnitude of the parameters indicate by how much the particular groups differ from the overall electorate (controlling for the other variables in the model). Thus, if the fitted odds ratios are close to 1, either just above or just below, then the groups in question are relatively similar in their support for BJP+. The further apart they are the more different the group's voting patterns are.

Table 7.1 shows the parameter estimates for each of the variables. To some extent the support base of the BJP resembles, if not the élite, then definitely the middle and upper classes. That is to say, that although the most advantaged members of society may not always be the most likely to vote BJP, the most disadvantaged are at any rate the least likely. Although it may be tempting to say that the BJP is therefore a party that represents social and economic privileges, none of the evidence is really strong enough to support this. On the whole, the degrees of polarization within the variables are relatively weak, that is with the noticeable and distinct exception of community.

[1] The SPSS syntax used to run this logistic regression is:

```
Logistic regression BJP
/Method = enter comm occup educ age sex locality
/Contrast (Comm) = Deviation
/Contrast (Educ) = Deviation
/Contrast (Age) = Deviation
/Contrast (Sex) = Deviation
/Contrast (Locality) = Deviation
/Criteria pin (.05) pout (.10) iterate (20).
```

Note that as Sex is a binary variable we do not need to write a Contrast statement for it.

TABLE 7.1: Social Bases of BJP Vote, 1991, 1996, and 1998: Logistic Regression Parameter Estimates

	1991		1996		1998	
	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)
Community[a]						
Upper caste	1.34**	3.84	1.37**	3.93	1.08**	2.95
OBC	0.70**	2.01	0.73**	2.07	0.65**	1.92
SC	–0.34	0.71	–0.03	0.96	–0.16	0.85
ST	–0.04	0.96	0.34**	1.42	0.08	1.09
Muslim	–1.27	0.28	–1.77**	0.17	–1.55**	0.21
Other	–0.39	0.68	–0.64	0.53	–0.10	0.90
Class[b]						
Highest	0.19	1.21	0.28*	1.32	0.11	1.12
High	0.18	1.20	0.16	1.17	0.19*	1.21
Middle	0.21	1.23	–0.01	0.99	0.04	1.04
Low	–0.24	0.78	0.09	0.91	–0.13	0.87
Lowest	–0.34*	0.71	–0.52*	0.59	–0.21*	0.81
Education						
Graduate	0.26	1.30	0.13	1.13	0.05	1.05
Up to College	0.02	1.01	–0.01	0.99	0.05	1.05
Up to Middle	–0.26	0.77	–0.02	0.98	–0.13	0.88
Illiterate	–0.02	0.98	–0.10	0.90	0.03	1.03
Sex						
Male	0.06	1.06	0.18**	1.20	0.32**	1.38
Female	–0.06	0.94	–0.18**	0.84	–0.32**	0.72
Age						
17 to 25	–0.02	0.98	0.23**	1.26	0.19*	1.21
26 to 35	0.24	1.28	0.10	1.10	0.12	1.12
36 to 45	0.21	1.23	0.02	1.02	–0.04	0.96
46 to 55	–0.20	0.82	–0.08	0.93	–0.08	0.93
56+	–0.23	0.79	–0.27**	0.76	–0.19*	0.83
Locality						
Urban	0.03	1,03	0.15**	1.16	+0.14	1.15
Rural	–0.03	0.97	–0.15**	0.83	–0.14	0.87
Constant	–2.14		–1.41		–0.72	
N	3996		8320		7392	

Notes: ** Significant at the 0.001 level.
* Significant at the 0.01 level.

Sources: NES, 1996 and 1998. (For a methodological note on the National Election Surveys, see Appendix XX of the Congress Paper by Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav.)

[a] For a detailed description of how the community variable was constructed, see Appendix XX of Congress paper by Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav.

[b] Similarly, for explanation of the Class variable, see Appendix XX.

Controlling for all the variables, it is the upper castes that are by far the most likely to vote BJP. This means that although graduates are more likely to vote BJP+ than illiterates, and men more likely than women, and so on, caste overrides their influence.

Table 7.2 gives a summary of how significant each of the variables are in effecting the vote for BJP+. Chi2 is a measure for the difference between the expected and the observed results. The expected results assume a null association. That is, one would expect all groups within the variable to give the same degree of support to BJP+. The greater the difference between the relative levels of support, the greater the Chi2. Community and class, and to a lesser extent sex, age, and locality, all play a part, although community is by far the most significant. Therefore, if the social base of the BJP has expanded, the key variable that is needed to measure it with reference to is community.

TABLE 7.2: Summary of Variables

	1991		1996		1998	
	Chi2	df	Chi2	df	Chi2	df
Community	147.45**	5	579.33**	5	514.04**	5
Class	22.49	4	40.10**	4	26.17**	4
Education	9.19	3	6.39	3	7.13	3
Sex	3.77	1	10.81*	1	36.38**	1
Age	9.20	4	36.72**	4	27.25**	4
Locality	8.34	1	24.08**	1	9.91	1

Notes: df stands for degree of freedom. The Chi2 statistic is the difference in -2 log-likelihoods between the final model and a reduced model. The reduced model is formed by omitting an effect from the final model. The null hypothesis is that all parameters of that effect are 0.

** Significant at the 0.001 level.

* Significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

SOCIAL EXPANSION

By looking at the internal composition, or column percentages, of the BJP+ the distribution of the different communities within the party can be analysed. This indicates what percentage of BJP

voters are upper caste, Other Backward Caste (OBC), Scheduled Caste (SC), etc. Secondly, the degree of support that each community gives to the BJP can be looked at. Although all the communities may vote BJP to some extent, the row percentages and odds ratios show which community offers the greatest and least support. However, the row percentages only show absolute increases, and not relative increases. To see whether the communities exhibit any change in their voting patterns, or are just being swept along with the tide, the odds ratios need to be looked at. It is important to look at the picture from both sides. Inflow tables tend to highlight the cross-cutting of cleavages, whereas the row percentages show to what degree people vote along caste lines. Although similar information, in terms of change, can be gained from both approaches, the distinction remains important. Thirdly, the overall effect of community on voting can be looked at. Phi and Chi2 both measure its aggregate significance by quantifying the level of polarization along community lines in one election.

As the multivariate analysis led us to suspect, it is the upper castes that form the most dominant section of the BJP+ support. This was still the case in 1998 as it was in 1991, so in that respect it would seem that little has changed. However, the degree to which they predominate has undergone major changes. Table 7.3 shows that there has been a real and significant shift in the social composition of the BJP+. The proportion of BJP+ voters who are upper caste has fallen by 10 per cent since 1991. This shift away from the heavy reliance on upper castes has been matched by gradual growth in representation from all the other communities. Growth has been most pronounced amongst the OBCs, whose presence has increased by 4 per cent, although there has also been an increase in the other social groupings of SC (3 per cent), Scheduled Tribe (ST) (2 per cent), and Muslim (1 per cent). However, these counter-growths have been relatively small, and could merely be the result of standard sampling error. Therefore, too much should not be read into them at this stage.

The row percentages in Table 7.4 show the degree of support that each community gave to the Jana Sangh in 1967 and to the BJP+ in 1991, 1996, and 1998. The 1967 data need to be treated with some caution. Not only is the overall sample size quite small and restricted to only male respondents, but also the Jana Sangh share of the vote is small. Therefore, the sample may not have

TABLE 7.3: BJP+ Support by Community, Column Percentages, 1991, 1996, and 1998

	1991	1996	1998
Hindu Upper	52	48	42
Hindu OBC	34	35	38
SC	8	10	11
ST	5	6	7
Muslim	1	2	2
N	1008	2318	2799

Notes: I. The proportion of the community groups within the samples have been adjusted so that their size is standardized over time. In each year the percentages of the groups have been set so that Hindu Upper = 27 per cent, Hindu OBC = 31 per cent, SC = 17 per cent, ST = 8 per cent, Muslim = 12 per cent , and Other = 5 per cent. The SC, ST, and Muslim percentages, are taken from the 1991 Census figures. The Hindu Upper and Hindu OBC percentages are derived from the average of their respective sizes from the NES71 and NES96 sample distributions. Other is a residual category.
II. Because 'others' are a heterogeneous grouping, changes in their voting behaviour are essentially meaningless. Thus, to eliminate their effect on the overall changes, which might disguise changes that are happening in other groups, they have been omitted from the calculations. However, their removal does not substantially alter the pattern of what has happened, it just allows for a slightly more nuanced analysis.

accurately picked up the Jana Sangh voters. However, broadly speaking it can be said that the upper castes gave far more support to the Jana Sangh than the other community groups did, which is also true for the BJP 30 years later. In this sense then there has been a strong degree of continuity between the respective social profiles of the two parties.

However, in terms of finer analysis, it has not been possible to draw any other robust links between the two parties. Instead, what can be done is to see what has happened to the BJP since 1991. The row percentages show that during the 1990s there has been absolute growth in support for the BJP+ across all the communities. However, to see whether this rise in popularity has been evenly dispersed across the board a study of how the odds ratios have changed is needed.

In the hierarchy of support by community little has changed since 1991. Relative to the overall electorate, the upper castes still

TABLE 7.4: BJP+ Support by Community, Row Percentages, 1967, 1991, 1996, and 1998

	Row per cent				Odds ratios			
	1967	1991	1996	1998	1967	1991	1996	1998
Hindu Upper	15	32	51	54	2.03	2.31	2.43	2.00
Hindu OBC	7	18	32	42	0.86	1.07	1.10	1.23
SC	5	8	16	22	0.60	0.42	0.44	0.48
ST	–	11	23	28	–	0.60	0.70	0.66
Muslim	2	1	4	7	0.23	0.05	0.10	0.13
Other	4	10	11	29	0.47	0.54	0.29	0.70
All	8	17	30	37	–	–	–	–
Chi2	56	436	867	670				
df	5	5	5	5				
Phi	0.157	0.268	0.301	0.288				

Source: NES, 1967; 1996; and 1998.

give the greatest support to the BJP, followed by the OBCs, the STs, the SCs, and the Muslims, respectively. However, the odds ratios show that there has been a relative decrease in the support from the upper castes. Even though more upper castes voted BJP+ in 1998 than in 1991, their overall dominance has been reduced by the greater propensity of the other communities to vote BJP+.

The odds ratios for the upper castes were their highest in 1996. However, they significantly fell in 1998. Even though the odds ratios for the upper castes voting BJP+ were higher in 1991 than in 1998, the overall effect of community was lower. This indicates that the social cleavages were not as pronounced as they later became. The Chi2 for community was at its highest in 1996, and then dropped a little in 1998. However, the disadvantage with using Chi2 as a comparative measure between samples, rather than a comparative measure of variables within the same sample as was used in Table 7.2, is that it is sensitive to the size of the sample. Thus bigger values are expected when big samples are used. To some degree then the rise in Chi2 might merely reflect the overall rise in popularity for the BJP and not indicate a strengthening of social cleavages as might first be assumed. To verify this, Phi is used. The Phi results support what Chi2 indicated.

Therefore, social profile needs to be explored from two angles. First, what is the relationship between the move away from upper castes, and the rise in the other communities? And second, what is the overall effect of community? Having examined how the overall shape of the BJP and its allies has changed, we next examine how these profiles compare to those in the three waves of the BJP expansion.

Regional Expansion

Does the social profile of the BJP remain constant from the time of its establishment? Does the social profile take the same shape in each wave? How do the different social profiles change over the course of time?

To answer these questions the validity of three hypotheses is tested below. The first hypothesis is that expansion takes the form of a top-down conversion. That is, it enters through the upper castes, who have traditionally been the most likely to vote BJP and

would therefore be the most receptive to its arrival, and then draws in support from the other community groups afterwards. The second hypothesis is that the social profile on entry reflects the BJP+'s profile at that time. In this respect, similar profiles in each of the regions would be expected. Third, in each phase or penetration, the party redefines itself and explicitly tries to appeal to new voters. In this instance there would be markedly different profiles in each of the regions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the states where the BJP has had the longest political presence are the states where the BJP is still most popular. The secondary states are also the second most popular. In 1996 the BJP+ vote share increased noticeably, and the party is now only marginally less successful than it is in the primary states. In the tertiary states the BJP had an almost non-existent presence before 1989. However, it is in these states that its growth has been most dramatic, its vote share rising from 10.2 per cent in 1991 to 35.4 per cent in 1998.

Table 7.6 shows the inflow of where the BJP+'s support comes from. Whereas Table 7.5 showed the percentage of people in each region who voted BJP+, this table shows each region as a percentage of the total number of people who voted BJP+. That is, in 1998, 31.4 per cent of the people who voted BJP+ came from the primary states. The table illustrates how the BJP's reliance on the primary states has dwindled over the years. Although the BJP is most successful in the primary states, in 1998 the largest number of its votes came from the tertiary states. This makes the party's expansion into this area all the more significant.

Table 7.7 shows the column percentages for BJP+ support in each of the regional groupings. At first glance the table seems to paint a rather confusing picture. However, by focusing on the changes that have taken place in each region, it is possible to gain some indication of what the enduring characteristics of each are and thus begin to test the stated hypotheses.

The proportion of upper castes within the BJP fold in the primary states has not changed significantly over the three elections. With a slight fall between 1991 and 1998 the values have merely oscillated 1 percentage point either side of the average, and 1996 value, of 41 per cent. Similarly, its proportion within the tertiary states has not altered much either. It is within the secondary states that the big changes have occurred. The proportion of upper castes in 1991 was 54 per cent, marking it as the most

TABLE 7.5: Regional Expansion of BJP

State	First Wave			Second Wave			Third Wave			
	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
BJP Primary										
Delhi	25.9	19.7	32.7	46.7	29.6	18.8	26.2	40.2	49.6	50.7
Himachal Pradesh	10.7	–	4.5	19.1	10.6	23.3	45.3	42.8	39.6	48.6
Madhya Pradesh	4.9	14.0	17.9	29.6	33.6	30.0	39.7	41.9	41.3	45.7
Rajasthan	3.0	11.1	9.3	10.3	12.4	23.7	29.6	40.9	42.4	41.7
Uttar Pradesh	7.3	14.8	17.6	22.2	12.3	6.4	7.6	32.8	33.4	36.5
All	7.0	14.0	16.6	22.6	18.0	15.9	21.4	36.9	38.4	41.1
BJP Secondary										
Bihar	0.4	0.1	2.3	11.1	12.1	6.9	11.7	16.0	35.0*	39.5*
Gujarat	–	–	1.4	–	2.2	18.6	30.5	50.4	48.5	48.3
Haryana	–	–	–	19.9	11.2	7.5	9.3	10.2	34.9*	30.5*
Maharashtra	–	3.4	4.4	7.4	5.2	10.1	23.7	29.7*	38.6*	42.2*
Punjab	5.6	16.0	15.2	12.5	4.5	3.4	4.2	–	6.5	11.7
All	1.8	5.3	5.7	8.9	7.6	9.4	17.9	24.9	36.6	38.8
BJP Tertiary										
Andhra Pradesh	–	0.1	1.2	1.4	1.6	2.2	2.0	9.6	5.7	50.3*
Assam	3.6	–	–	5.5	2.5	0.4		9.6	15.9	24.5
Goa	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.7	15.6	13.8	30.0

(Contd.)

TABLE 7.5 contd.

State	First Wave			Second Wave			Third Wave			
	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
Karnataka	4.2	2.5	2.7	2.3	1.9	4.7	2.6	28.8	24.9	38.5*
Kerala	–	–	0.7	1.4	1.4	1.8	4.5	4.6	5.6	8.0
Orissa	–	–	–	0.6	0.2	1.2	1.3	9.5	13.4	48.7*
Tamil Nadu	–	–	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.7	2.9	46.2*
West Bengal	5.9	1.4	1.1	1.4	0.9	0.4	1.7	11.7	6.9	34.6*
All	1.5	0.6	0.9	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.9	10.2	9.5	35.4
Total	3.1	5.9	6.4	9.4	7.4	7.4	11.4	20.1	24.9	36.1

Notes: 1991: BJP+ = BJP and Shiv Sena
1996: BJP+ = BJP, Shiv Sena, HVP, and Samata
1998: BJP+ = BJP, Shiv Sena, HVP, Samata, AIADMK, SAD(B), Trinamool Congress , Lokshakti, BJD, and TDP(NTR).
Source: CSDS Data Unit.

TABLE 7.6: BJP+ Support by Region, Inflow Table

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
Primary	62.2	71.3	68.8	65.5	63.6	55.5	48.2	45.1	41.6	31.4
Secondary	17.0	24.6	25.2	26.8	29.4	35.3	44.3	31.3	40.0	28.2
Tertiary	20.8	4.1	6.0	7.7	7.0	9.2	7.5	23.6	18.4	40.4

Notes: BJP primary states = Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh.
BJP secondary states = Karnataka, Bihar, Goa, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Assam, Punjab, and Haryana.
BJP tertiary states = Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, North-Eastern States.

Source: CSDS Data Unit.

TABLE 7.7: BJP+ Support by Community by Region, Column Percentages, 1991, 1996, and 1998

	1991			1996			1998		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Upper	45	54	39	44	41	39	43	40	40
OBC	38	34	45	39	37	40	36	40	38
SC	11	6	10	9	13	11	10	12	13
ST	5	7	7	6	7	7	8	6	6
Muslim	2	–	–	2	2	2	2	2	3
N	541	327	92	1086	815	300	920	831	802

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

upper caste reliant region of all. However, in 1996 its share fell by 12 percentage points, which was further consolidated by an additional fall of 2 percentage points between 1996 and 1998. In terms of a move away from the upper castes it is, therefore, in the secondary states that the major changes have taken place.

How do these change compare with what has been happening with the other castes? The OBC share has been slightly erratic in the primary states. A slight rise in its share between 1991 and 1996 was followed by a slightly bigger drop. The overall impression though is of relative continuity, in at least insofar as all the changes have basically cancelled each other out. In the tertiary states there has been a noticeable fall in its share. However, in the secondary states its share has consistently gone up, rising from 34 per cent to 37 per cent to 40 per cent. The SCs and Muslims have remained fairly stable in the primary states, and make some gains in the secondary and tertiary states. The STs have increased their share in the primary states, and remained fairly stable in the secondary and tertiary states, although their share did drop a fraction in 1998. However, for the small groups, such as the STs and Muslims even small changes in their proportion within the BJP can be the result of significant changes in their voting behaviour. Therefore, it is a good idea to see how their odds ratios have changed.

The row percentages offer an interesting insight into the voting behaviour of the Muslims. In 1991 a negligible number of Muslims voted BJP in the secondary and tertiary states (See Table 7.8). They are the last group to join the BJP bandwagon. However, as the BJP established itself in these states they voted for it in greater numbers. The voting seems to go in waves. In 1991 they only voted BJP in the primary states, where the party was already firmly entrenched. In 1996 they voted in all regions in greater numbers in the primary states and less so in the tertiary states. In 1998 they again voted in all regions, but this time just as much in the tertiary states.

This pattern leads to two possible conclusions. Firstly, that as the last to enter, they are led by the other communities, thus following a top-down conversion process. But the fact that their growth was most evident in the tertiary states indicates that the BJP+ appeals to them (or *vice versa*) when it sets itself up anew.

The odds ratios provide us with the firmest basis from which to examine our hypotheses of social expansion. In order for the

TABLE 7.8: BJP+ Support by Community by Region, Row Percentages, 1991, 1996, and 1998

	1991			1996			1998		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Upper	51	38	5	68	60	14	65	49	36
OBC	38	21	5	56	48	13	47	43	30
SC	20	6	2	21	30	7	25	23	18
ST	18	17	3	31	35	9	42	23	17
Muslim	4	–	–	8	6	2	7	6	7
Other	(19)	(16)	(–)	(31)	(9)	3	(42)	41	6
All	33	21	3	46	43	10	44	37	24

Note: Bracketed values when row total is less than 100.

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

top-down process to give an accurate representation of what has happened, one would expect to see the highest odds ratios for the upper castes and the lowest odds ratios for the Muslims and SC in the tertiary states. This is clearly not the case as both Muslim and SC support is weakest in the primary states and strongest in the tertiary states (See Table 7.9). And the upper castes odds ratios in the primary states are substantially higher than their odds ratios in the tertiary states. Thus, due to the lack of corroborating evidence we must refute the top-down hypothesis.

The second hypothesis, that the party carries its present profile into the states that it penetrates, is slightly more problematic. It is somewhat difficult to ascertain whether the BJP takes its profile with it when it enters new regions for two reasons. First, we do not have adequate data for the emergence of the party in the secondary states and given what we have, we cannot assume that the profile at entry follows the same course in each of the regions. That is, hypothetically even if the early profile of the secondary states reflected the profile of the primary states of that time, they may both have evolved in different ways over the course of time. Therefore, even though the profile of the secondary states does not closely resemble the profile of the primary states now, or even since 1991, the possibility that it once did cannot be ruled out. However, our data series does manage to capture the initial expansion into the tertiary states, and its gradual consolidation, so this gives a more robust footing from which to speculate. Given this, a further question arises. That is, which profile would carry through to the tertiary states—that of the primary states, or that of the secondary states? The question becomes redundant on analysis. The profile in the tertiary states bears little resemblance to that in either primary or secondary states in 1991, 1996, or 1998, so we must refute the theory. This leaves us with the third and most likely alternative. That is, the party redefines itself and tries to appeal to different sections of society each time it establishes itself on new territory.

In 1991 and 1996 the tribal vote becomes relatively stronger the further the region is away from the core. However, this pattern is clearly upset by the 1998 results, where it is strongest in the primary states and weakest in the secondary states. The major growth has obviously taken place in the primary states, but why is this? Perhaps this indicates something about the power of

TABLE 7.9: Odds Ratios for BJP+ Support by Community by Region, 1991, 1996, and 1998

	1991			1996			1998		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Upper	2.11	2.31	1.70	2.46	1.99	1.47	2.36	1.64	1.78
OBC	1.24	1.00	1.70	1.14	1.22	1.35	1.13	1.28	1.36
SC	0.51	0.24	0.66	0.42	0.57	0.58	0.42	0.51	0.69
ST	0.45	0.77	1.00	0.62	0.71	0.89	0.92	0.51	0.65
Muslim	0.08	–	–	0.07	0.08	0.18	0.10	0.11	0.24
Other	(0.48)	(0.72)	–	(0.69)	0.15	0.28	(0.92)	1.18	0.20
Chi2	191	154	19	458	248	62	318	194	155
df	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Phi	0.332	0.302	0.095	0.374	0.310	0.145	0.373	0.278	0.238

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

mobilization. The tribals' natural impulse to vote for the BJP more is when the party is an outsider. However, as a group to be mobilized, the tribals are relatively untouched. Thus, the BJP is able to appeal to them in a way that it could not do to the OBCs, SCs, and Muslims while still maintaining the support of the diehard upper caste faithful. In this way it follows the classic upper caste–Scheduled Caste mobilization strategies that were employed by Indira Gandhi in the 1970s. Thus, in light of the changes in the composition of the BJP+ in the different regions that were noted from Table 7.7, it must be accepted that the party shows a preference to mobilizing different communities in different regions. In this sense it does redefine itself.

In terms of the overall effect of community it can be seen that the Chi2 and Phi values decrease as the region moves further away from the primary states. This indicates that caste is less significant in the states the BJP has most recently infiltrated, and is still most significant in the old guard states where the BJP first emerged. What does this tell us? First, that the cleavages that were set up when the Jana Sangh emerged have by and large remained intact. Although the party has grown in these states, it has never managed to rid itself of its initial cleavages, but then, neither has it had to do so. The tertiary states are still less caste-based than other states, but whereas the primary states have only increased marginally since 1991, and the secondary states have even decreased, there has been a somewhat alarming use of community polarization in the tertiary states.

Political Expansion

Allies are an operational indicator of expansion and political credibility. The biggest electoral gains that the BJP combine made were in the regions where it had allies. How does the profile change with this inclusion? Do the allies give the party an entrance into other social groups? Or do they appeal to traditional BJP voters? Do they play a pivotal role in the party's reinvention? Do the allies offer a significant account for the widening social base of the BJP in the secondary and tertiary states? In the same state how does support for the BJP and its allies compare? To examine how respective sources of support for the BJP and its allies differ we disaggregate the state groupings in which the BJP

has fought alongside allies. In 1991 and 1996 this was only in the secondary states, and in 1998 it was the secondary and tertiary states.

In the secondary states in 1991 all the communities gave greater support to the BJP than to its allies (See Table 7.10). However, in 1996 the balance of power swung, with the allies claiming roughly equal, and marginally greater support amongst the OBCs and upper castes, respectively. The SCs and STs still gave greater support to the BJP than to the allies, and the Muslim vote was divided evenly between the two. In 1998, however, the allies increased their support relative to the BJP amongst the Scheduled Castes as well, leaving only the Scheduled Tribes, and the Muslims to a small extent, preferring to vote for the BJP than its allies.

Table 7.11 shows the complete picture of support by region for the BJP and its allies. The social base of the allies needs to be analysed both internally, comparing the differences between regions and over time, and externally, comparing it to the profile of the BJP.

The allies have two types of social base. The first wave of allies, those in the secondary states, has much more support amongst the upper castes and OBCs than they do amongst the other communities. Compared to the tertiary allies, the odds ratios for the SCs, STs, and Muslims are very low in the secondary states. However, the profile is somewhat different in the tertiary states. Although the odds ratios are still highest, by quite a margin, for the upper castes, there are a number of communities with odds ratios around, or just below, one. The SCs, STs, and Muslims, all have odds ratios that, relative to their other odds ratios in other regions and years, are high. Although the odds ratios for these communities do not set individual precedents, they do mark a significant collective increase. This is reflected by the very low values of Phi and Chi2, of which the Phi value is the lowest ever, second only to the value for the tertiary states in 1991.

By comparing the social profile of the BJP with that of its allies in the tertiary states in 1998 we can see how the inclusion of allies affects the social base of the BJP. In the tertiary states the upper castes, SCs, STs, and Muslims, all offer relatively greater support to the allies than to the BJP. This leaves the BJP somewhat OBC dominant, and weaker among the other castes. This suggests two

TABLE 7.10: BJP and BJP's Allies Support by Community by Region, Row Percentages, 1991, 1996, and 1998

	1991		1996		1998			
	Secondary		Secondary		Secondary		Tertiary	
	BJP	Allies	BJP	Allies	BJP	Allies	BJP	Allies
Upper	30	8	28	32	24	25	18	17
OBC	15	6	25	23	20	23	19	11
SC	6	–	22	7	8	14	9	9
ST	15	2	31	4	20	4	7	10
Muslim	–	–	3	3	4	1	4	3
Other	(15)	(1)	5	4	10	31	5	1
All	17	5	23	20	18	19	14	11

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

TABLE 7.11: Odds Ratios for BJP and BJP's Allies Support by Community by Region, 1991, 1996, and 1998

	1991				1996				1998				
	Primary	Secondary		Tertiary	Primary	Secondary		Tertiary	Primary	Secondary		Tertiary	
	BJP	BJP	Allies	BJP	BJP	BJP	Allies	BJP	BJP	BJP	Allies	BJP	Allies
Upper	2.11	2.09	1.65	1.70	2.46	1.30	1.88	1.47	2.36	1.44	1.42	1.35	1.65
OBC	1.24	0.86	1.21	1.70	1.14	1.11	1.19	1.35	1.13	1.14	1.27	1.44	1.00
SC	0.51	0.31	–	0.66	0.42	0.94	0.30	0.58	0.42	0.40	0.69	0.61	0.80
ST	0.45	0.86	0.39	1.00	0.62	1.50	0.16	0.89	0.92	1.14	0.18	0.46	0.90
Muslim	0.08	–	–	–	0.07	0.10	0.12	0.18	0.10	0.19	0.04	0.26	0.25
Other	(0.48)	(0.86)	(0.19)	–	(0.69)	0.18	0.17	0.28	(0.92)	0.51	1.92	0.32	0.08
Chi2	191	110	40	19	458	77	178	62	318	78	112	108	45
df	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Phi	0.332	0.225	0.153	0.095	0.374	0.173	0.262	0.145	0.373	0.176	0.211	0.198	0.128

Source: NES, 1996 and 1998.

things. Firstly, in the tertiary states the upper castes do not have the same affinity with the BJP as they do in the primary states, which may be partly due to the fact that in the tertiary states the BJP is not the preserve of the upper castes. Thus, the upper castes, the SCs, STs, and the Muslims all prefer the allies to the BJP, although probably each for somewhat different reasons.

To what extent has the BJP gained from its acquisition of allies? The social base of the BJP cannot be isolated purely by looking at who votes for the BJP. Depending upon seat sharing arrangements, voters who are committed BJP supporters may be forced into voting for one of their allies. Therefore, an interesting exercise is to see which party respondents would have voted for in 1998 if there had been no alliances. Table 7.12 shows the parties that respondents said they would have voted for if there had been no alliances. In the secondary states the BJP not only retains more of its own vote, but also claims more of the allies vote compared to the tertiary states. This indicates that the leaning of those who voted for the allies is much stronger towards the BJP in the secondary states. Due to the reduced sample size that the table produces, there are not enough cases to say anything meaningful about the STs and Muslims. Therefore, they have been discounted. However, what is clear is that a significantly higher percentage of upper castes would have voted BJP in the secondary states than in the tertiary states. This gives greater support to the view that the allies in the tertiary states appeal to the less traditional BJP voter, thus giving the BJP an entry into social groups that would not normally vote for them.

TABLE 7.12: Party Voted by Single Party Preference by Region, 1998

	Secondary			Tertiary		
	BJP	Allies	Other	BJP	Allies	Other
BJP	93	4	3	81	6	13
Allies	37	54	9	25	66	9

Notes: Question in 1998 was 'In this election most of the parties joined hands and formed new alliances. Suppose there were no alliances between the parties and they were all contesting elections separately. To whom would you have caste your vote for in that case?'

Source: NES, 1998.

TABLE 7.13: Voted Allies by Single Party Preference by Community by Region, 1998

	Secondary			Tertiary		
	BJP	Allies	Other	BJP	Allies	Other
Upper	46	46	8	31	60	9
OBC	38	52	10	19	74	7
SC	18	69	14	26	64	10

Source: NES, 1998.

CONCLUSION

So how has the BJP expanded? What effect has its regional and political expansions had on its social base? The regional expansion of the BJP has been intertwined with a distinct three tiered growth in its social appeal. To a large extent the presence of its political allies have aided this process, and allowed the party to gain a foothold in new territory. The relationship between the three forms of expansion is undoubtedly connected. However, as far as causal relationships go the direction is unclear. One can safely assume though that the BJP has been an active participant in determining which course its social expansion takes. And as for those who say that the BJP has little in common with most of its allies, it would seem that the selection criterion relies more on the allies' social appeal than on their ideological stance. In this respect the mobilization strategies that the BJP have employed have been very carefully orchestrated.

In each successive step that the BJP makes away from its homeland of the primary states, the groups that have expanded the most also move a step down the ladder of the party's traditional support base. Thus in the primary states, which represent the core of the party's stronghold, its core source of social support, that of the upper castes, has remained intact. The only other community that has been significantly mobilized in this region is that of the Scheduled Tribes.

Moving one step away, into the secondary states, it is the OBCs, who overall are the second most likely group to vote BJP, who have made the most significant increases in their propensity to vote for the party. The states in this region have a profile more similar

to the primary states than the tertiary states do. This is illustrated by the social base of the allies, which is relatively strong amongst the upper castes and OBCs and relatively weak amongst the other communities. It thus reinforces the overall mobility drive, with both BJP and allies working in tandem to appeal to similar sorts of people.

The third tier of SCs and Muslims have emerged most strongly in the tertiary states. In these states the BJP's reliance on its allies, both as a vote winner and as an entry point into other social groupings, is at its strongest. Whereas in the secondary states the partnerships mainly took the form of BJP-led alliances, in the tertiary states the alliances are generally regionally led, with the BJP supporting from the outside. Parties such as the AIADMK, TDP, and Trinamool Congress, and to a lesser extent the BJD, carry more weight locally than the BJP. Thus the BJP prospers by association, and without them would most probably become marginalized.

It is in the tertiary states that the less traditional BJP voters have become more enfranchised. Similarly, it is the presence of the allies that brings most support from these social groups. With the BJP on its own gaining little favour with anyone other than the upper castes and the OBCs, its political future lies in the hands of its allies. The biggest gains that the BJP made have been in these states, which now also constitute its largest source of support. So as the BJP pushes to establish itself at the centre once again, the role of the allies in these states will become more important than ever.

In a sense, then, there are three parties. Admittedly, they are not completely independent ones, but nontheless they are each distinctive in their own way. Each one has played a significant role in helping the BJP become the national party that it is today. It has only been by delicately redefining itself and its social base that the party has been able to spread its wings and leave its nesting place of north India. Although much of the momentum for this change has come from within the party, the transition has only been finally possible because of the help it has received from parties outside. This help, though, seems to be somewhat illusory. The allies especially in the tertiary states, have not provided a push for the BJP to reach a firm handhold, but have provided the handhold itself. If the allies were to let go then in all likelihood the BJP would have a long way to fall.

8

The Rebirth of the Shiv Sena: The Symbiosis of Discursive and Organizational Power[+]

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In rally upon rally over the last half-dozen years, the Shiv Sena party supporters, have been exhorted to intone, 'Say with pride, that we are Hindu' (*Garav se kaho hum Hindu hai*), in Hindi, not Marathi. This incantation as a centre-piece of Shiv Sena events would have been scarcely imaginable in the early years of the Shiv Sena. Both the stress on a Hindu identity and the use of Hindi in political sloganeering are indicative of a major shift in the politics of regionalism in western India.

This turn to Hinduism is what seemed to underly the outbreak of violence in Bombay on a scale never before witnessed in the city. In the winter of 1992–3, Bombay experienced the worst Hindu–Muslim conflagration the city has ever known. According to Human Rights Watch, over 1000 people were killed, and tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands fled the city.[1] It is a shift in

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[1] Human Rights Watch, *Playing the 'Communal Card': Communal Violence and Human Rights* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995), pp. 26–7.

which the once local, nativist party in Bombay, the Shiv Sena, now finds itself as the dominant political force in the state of Maharashtra, with a ready capacity to incite widespread violence, extract rents, and shape public policy and legislative initiatives (including the decision to first nullify and then renegotiate the Enron power project that recently captured global attention). This paper attempts to understand the role of religious nationalism in the ascendancy of the Shiv Sena.

The argument of this article is two-fold; first, that the Shiv Sena effectively exploited a discursive opportunity to link its own locally produced version of militant Hinduism with the politicized Hinduism that has been rapidly spreading throughout North India since the mid-1980s; but, second, that the discourse of Hindu nationalism was only able to take hold in Bombay and in Maharashtra due to the tightly structured and coercive character of the Shiv Sena as an organization operating in a political milieu that was increasingly fractured and undirected. Clearly, discourses count. As long as the Shiv Sena continued to focus on local, nativist issues alone, its political appeal beyond the metropolitan reach of Bombay city was limited. And yet, its turn to the ideology of Hindutva would have been of less far-reaching implications were it not for the party's organizational strengths (including its capacity to intimidate) and the incapacity of other party and state institutions to respond.

The linking of religion with nationalism, by itself, but particularly in a form that vilifies a population whose 'difference' has deep historical roots, is likely to exert immense mobilizational power, both electoral and on the streets. Hindu nationalism on its own, however, can neither account for the devastation in Bombay during the winter of 1992–3 nor for the Shiv Sena's electoral successes of the 1990s. The discourse of religious nationalism derives its power in part from a transposition of language, ideology, and rhetoric that heightens the politics of identity. But the power of discourse also depends crucially on the capacity or incapacity of organizations to make any particular set of competing discursive claims 'stick'. In the case of the Shiv Sena, Hindutva, and Maharashtra, this has everything to do with the Sena's organizational wizardry and coercive practices and with the weakened institutional structures in the state of Maharashtra.

A few words about terminology: Discourse refers, in this article,

to language and symbolic actions. Discourse is meaning-making work. It consists of the explanations people offer for their actions and the interpretations they attach to the actions and words of others. It is true that the links between what is understood, said, and done are plainly not direct. People often act in ways that contradict what they say they will do, and the same set of words and actions are often interpreted in contradictory ways by different groups or individuals. The justification, however, for taking seriously the expressive or discursive dimension of human sociability is that in admittedly complex ways, linguistic acts of interpretation shape how people feel, think, report their interests, and imagine the choices they have for their actions.

Much recent work on discourse is inspired by the pioneering work of Michel Foucault. With Foucault, we prefer the term discursive to ideological, in part to avoid weighing (when such an evaluation is not the project of this article) the truth-claims of one set of beliefs over another. But we also refer to discourses rather than ideologies in order to suggest that what may be at work here is not just an attachment to particular political 'positions' on Hinduism and Islam but also a deployment of a whole set of expressive acts (the wearing of saffron cloth and holy beads, the lavish spending at the time of religious festivals, etc.).

Foucault uses the term *discourse* in a way that makes it synonymous with institutional or disciplinary systems.[2] The reason for this conflation of language and institutions within the notion of discourse relates to the subtle ways in which he sees the powers of institutions as deeply imbricated in modes of expression and categorization. The boundaries between discourse and institutions are indeed fuzzy. Nevertheless, we believe that the distinction of speech acts and institutional arrangements is both possible and analytically productive.

We understand institutions as constituted by both discursive and organizational practices. Institutions are value-embued organizations.[3] Organizations operate according to a set of rules, based on

[2] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Patheon, 1972), pp. 171–3.

[3] Richard W. Scott, *Institutions and Organizations* (Thousand CA: Oaks, Sage Publications, 1995) and Walter W. Powell and Paul J. Dimaggio, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysist* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

structures, that serve particular ends. But institutions are more than organizations. Institutions are associated with a set of particular norms or values, while organizations operate to perform particular functions. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS), for instance, is both an organization and institution. It is the former in the sense that it recruits personnel through a highly competitive examination process, trains these recruits, and assigns them to staff the administrative services of both the central and state bureaucracies. But the IAS is an institution in the sense that, as the 'steel frame of India', it has long been identified with old-school patrician integrity, dedication to political impartiality, and correct bearing and conduct.

Different organizational arrangements privilege the discursive acts of some groups over others. Attention to discourse takes seriously what people think, what they say, what they write, and the corresponding symbolic expressions. Concurrent attention to organizations precludes confining this interpretative analysis to what people say they mean, slighting the power-laden and sometimes coercive organizational processes that transmit this meaning-making work to others. This broadly Weberian orientation is what informs this article.

When people use and manipulate a certain set of symbols and words as distinct from some other set that they earlier used, one can speak of discursive change and at least provisionally conclude that this change represents some transformation of individual and collective self-understanding and at least a disposition to altering strategies and interests. Of course, changes of interests and strategies can be, and often are, motivated by new organizational practices that have implications for inter-subjective understandings. In these situations the boundaries of discursive and organizational practices can be blurred. In the present context, however, our contention is that the empirical examples used in this article are often outside these intersecting domains. Frequent references linking patriotism to religion is a discursive practice; the extortion of funds from businesses as protection money is an organizational practice. Both have implications for the institution of electoral politics in Maharashtra.

BACKGROUND

Although there is disagreement over the reasons for the Shiv Sena's ascendancy, there is little dispute over the basic chronology of

political events that preceded the party's emergence as a statewide political force. Maharashtra has been a stronghold of the Congress party for decades. The Congress had dominated state politics continuously from the period prior to the formation of the unilingual state of Maharashtra in 1960 until 1995. Congress chief ministers reigned, supported by strong majority governments straight up to 1995, broken only by a two-year hiatus in 1978–80. Congress dominance in Maharashtra survived numerous challenges: the passionate and sometimes violent Samyukta Maharashtra Movement in the 1950s, which demanded a separate state for Marathi-speakers;[4] the claims for autonomy from the Vidarbha and Marathwada regions of the state; the state's strong dalit (ex-untouchable) movement;[5] a vibrant rural peasant movement that drew attention to urban–rural divisions; significant fighting within the party that was marked by a rapid turnover of chief ministers throughout the 1980s; and an economy that underwent inflationary swings and that has consistently suffered from high levels of unemployment and underemployment despite strong periods of growth.[6] Given the multiple disruptive elements that might have undermined Congress dominance over the decades, why did Congress suffer a reversal only in 1995 and why was the Shiv Sena–Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance the political entity that succeeded in outdistancing the Congress in the state elections? This question is part of the puzzle that this article explores.

The Shiv Sena was formed in 1966 in Bombay; it contested municipal elections two years later, winning one-third of the seats

[4] Y. D. Phadke, *Politics and Language* (Bombay: Himalaya Publishing House, 1979), and Ram Joshi, 'Politics in Maharashtra—An Overview', in Usha Thakkar and Mangesh Kulkarni (ed.), *Politics in Maharashtra* (Delhi: Himalaya, 1995).

[5] Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* (Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 1993) and Eleanor Zelliott, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (Delhi: Manohar, 1992).

[6] Jayant Lele, 'Saffronisation of Shiv Sena', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24 June 1995. Also reprinted in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (eds), *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1995). Joshi, 'Politics in Maharashtra', op. cit., Rajdeep Sardesai, 'The Shiv Sena's New Avatar; Marathi Chauvinism and Hindu Communalism', in Usha Thakkar and Mangesh Kulkarni (eds), *Politics in Maharashtra* (Delhi: Himalaya, 1995).

in the Municipal Corporation. From the beginning, the party made its imprint on local politics by championing the economic interests of Maharashtrians whose jobs, the party claimed, were being usurped by outsiders, particularly South Indians, living in Bombay. As a sons-of-the-soil movement, the Shiv Sena had made Maharashtrian-centric politics its first priority, followed closely by an anti-communist stance and, only in third place, by the championing of a patriotism that demonized 'anti-national' Muslims.

From its inception, the Shiv Sena won a reputation for violence. Its attack on the Communist party office in Parel in 1967, Shiv Sainiks' role in the murder of Communist MLA Krishna Desai, the assaults on Udipi (South Indian) restaurants and on street hawkers, and its involvement in the 1971 Bhiwandi riots and in the Belgaun border clashes were all early demonstrations of the party's readiness to utilize extreme methods of political action. At the same time, the party pursued a populist programme—providing services in local neighbourhoods and slums and courting the loyalties, particularly, of the Marathi-speaking male youth.

During this early period, the party was able to establish a firm place for itself in the Municipal Corporation with party members securing the mayorship on at least four different occasions during the 1970s. But until the 1990s, the Shiv Sena was never a significant political presence outside the Bombay–Thane municipalities.

The Shiv Sena rebounded into the political scene in 1985, winning 70 seats in the Municipal Corporation, up from the 21 seats it had won in 1978.[7] From the mid-1980s, the party underwent an ideological makeover, reordering its agenda to emphasize themes of Hindu nationalism. The Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, stepped up his anti-Muslim diatribe, urging his followers to take up a holy war or *dharam yuddh*.[8] The Shiv Sena's sponsored Hindu festivals, and celebrations became more lavish and elaborate; the party reached out to try to create an alliance of Hindu-minded parties, calling a meeting in 1994 of seven Hindu parties. The party continued to play, moreover, a self-proclaimed part in the increasing numbers of communal conflagrations spanning the 1984

[7] Usha Thakkar, (1995), 'The Commissioner and the Corporators: Power Politics at Municipal Level', in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (eds), *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press), p. 265.

[8] Sudheendra Kulkarni, 'The Ominous Entry of Shiv Sena in Rural Areas', *Mainstream*, 7 March 1987, p. 13.

Bhiwandi riots and the ravages of Bombay in 1992–3.[9] In anticipation of the 1990 election, the Shiv Sena entered into a seat adjustment with the BJP, whose image as the champion of Hindu nationalism was by now well honed throughout northern India. In 1990, the Shiv Sena, together with its BJP ally, won 94 seats in the state Assembly, up from the 16 seats they (together) controlled in 1985. With the 1995 State Assembly election, the Shiv Sena–BJP combine secured 138 seats, eclipsing the Congress, whose seat tally fell to 80 seats from 141 in 1990.[10] In the 1996 parliamentary elections, the Shiv Sena continued its electoral climb, winning 15 seats, up from 4 in the previous round.

Explanations of Shiv Sena's resurgence fall into three broad approaches.

1. Some accounts emphasize *societal* shifts—pointing to the economic duress and rising aspirations of the Maharashtrian youth that have accompanied the rapid urbanization of Maharashtra in the last decade[11] and the penetration of capitalism into the countryside.[12] In a related vein, others emphasize the process of democratization in which caste and class groups beyond the traditionally dominant Maratha caste have become politicized by and available to competing party élites.[13] Societal accounts also stress the continued competition between Maharashtrians and non-Maharashtrians in the private and public sectors.[14]

2. Another set of explanations focus on *institutional and organizational factors*, such as the sudden access to resources gained by

[9] Ashgar Ali Engineer, 'Anatomy of Shiv Sena's Growth', *Mainstream*, 3 September 1989, pp. 15–18 and 'Communalism and Communal Violence in 1995', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23 December 1995, pp. 3267–8.

[10] M. Rahman, 'Primed for Battle', *India Today*, 15 February 1995, p. 35 and Lekha Rattanani and Smruti Koppikar, 'Storming the Citadel', *India Today*, 31 March 1995, p. 44.

[11] Rajendra Vora, 'Shift of Power from Rural to Urban Sector', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13–20 January 1996.

[12] Lele, 'Saffronisation of Shiv Sena', *Economic and Political Weekly*, op. cit., pp. 1520–8.

[13] Thomas Blom Hansen, 'Democratization, Mass-Politics and Hindu Identity: The Communalisation of Bombay', Paper prepared for the workshop on Political Culture and Religion in the Third World, ECPR Joint Session, Bordeaux, April–May 1995.

[14] Arun Sadhu, 'Not by Jobs Alone', *Free Press Journal*, 6 January 1988.

the Shiv Sena's 1985 victory in the municipality, which permitted the party to control rents, taxes, and contracts during a period in which the Bombay real estate was booming;[15] similarly, some point to the party's service functions, running ambulance services, responding to local grievances.[16] This focus on organization also notes the disarray of the Congress party, the voters' disillusionment at the party's reputation for corruption,[17] and the alienation of Muslim voters, who were an important vote bank for the party in Maharashtra.[18]

3. A third set of accounts allude to *ideological or discursive forces*. Almost all analyses of the Shiv Sena's resurgence describe the turn in Bombay politics towards 'saffronization' and the playing of the 'Hindu Card' as an explicit part of Shiv Sena's ascendancy, although the religious, nationalist rhetoric is rarely the subject of very extensive analysis, and although it is often unclear how much weight the analysis assigns to the Shiv Sena's Hindutva appeal.[19]

In this article, we acknowledge the importance of looking at the socio-economic underpinnings of Hindutva and of political identities generally. Indeed, that was the approach of one of the authors in an account of the Shiv Sena's earlier years.[20] But at the same time, our preference for the second and third approaches (institutions and discourse) is premised on the argument that economic and social disruptions, whether precipitated by industrialization, urbanization, or the penetration of capitalism and/or urbanization, can explain feelings of anomie, identity loss, and availability for political mobilization, but that these socio-economic changes cannot explain why people search out the political solutions

[15] Sardesai, 'The Shiv Sena's New Avatar', op. cit., p. 132.
[16] 'Sena Strength Spreading', *Onlooker*, 16–30 September 1989, pp. 21–5.
[17] 'Congress-I Losing Ground', *India Today*, 15 February 1995, p. 33.
[18] Vora, 'Shift of Power', op. cit., p. 33.
[19] Analyses of individual-level surveys are being undertaken by Nandita Aras, a doctoral student in political science at Columbia University. Surveys under the supervision of Yogendra Yadav and V. B. Singh at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi should also be able to shed light on the extent to which voter support for the Shiv Sena has been augmented or diminished by the alliance's turn to Hindu nationalism.
[20] Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: Preferential Politics in Bombay* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979).

offered by the 'right' rather than those preferred by more moderate, centrist forces or by the Left. To understand this, we must turn to organizations and to discourse. We see the Shiv Sena's resurgence as reflecting the weakened conditions of organizations that compete with the Shiv Sena's and BJP's mobilizational capacities and as reflecting, too, the power of a newly ascendant national discourse. Maharashtra is, after all, not an independent country, and the discourse of Hindutva is a meeting ground for the mutually constitutive process by which identities, both local and national, are created.

Creating Hindutva: The Power of Discourse

If there were ever a location that seems to suggest how politics is reshaped when a new (or in this case a new–old) discourse catches on, Bombay and its environs in the 1990s are it. We are not dismissing the importance of economic interest: the Shiv Sena's emergence in the mid-1960s rode a wave of very overt economic and social discontent among the Maharashtrians. Although the Maharashtrians had won their own state a half-decade previously, no instant amelioration in the job position of the Marathi-speakers materialized, and the economic successes of non-Marathi-speaking ethnic groups in Bombay, particularly in white-collar jobs and in the commercial sectors of the economy, were undeniable. The newly aroused Maharashtrian aspirations in the face of the apparent economic success of other groups provided an ideal 'cause' for a political party to champion.[21] This was in the 1960s.

[21] The dominance of 'outsiders' was the subject of weekly exposés, starting in 1965, of *Marmik*, the Marathi weekly started by the then cartoonist, Bal Thackeray. In the early years, before the 1966 founding of the Shiv Sena, *Marmik*'s pages dwelled on the dangers of communists ('Lalbhai') and of Pakistani infiltrators. But it was not until *Marmik* drew attention to the presumed economic injustices suffered by Maharashtrian white-collar aspirants that the magazine's circulation soared and the Shiv Sena took off. By 1966, *Marmik*'s circulation had doubled, reaching a readership that probably comprised nearly half of the literate Maharashtrian population in the city above the age of 15 years (*Ethnicity and Equality*, op. cit., p. 51).

In the 1990s, however, the Shiv Sena capitalized on an opportunity that was more discursive than material. The absence of any major change in the economic or social conditions structuring Hindu–Muslim relations could not be more striking. Indeed, the Sena did not claim (nor would it have rung true) that the Muslims were taking jobs or educational places or housing away from Maharashtrians as the Sena had claimed about South Indians in the 1960s.[22] No exposés about Muslim economic encroachment, similar to the 1960s, lists of South Indian company employees, ran in the pages of *Saamna*, Shiv Sena's daily. Rather, there were at best vague allusions to the burden that must be borne by the taxpayer who has to support ever the allegedly rising numbers of illegal (Bangladeshi) immigrants and to the Muslim (Bangladeshi) hawkers who crowd the roads and to the thousands who occupy scarce space, preying on urban services in an already overcrowded city. Muslims were not portrayed as traders whose wily ways were suspect or as privileged professionals who dominated the higher rungs of the city's white-collar occupations. What Muslims were—according to the Sena's creed—were seditious. It was their presumed lack of political identification with the Indian nation rather than their societal position that was the subject of the Shiv Sena's diatribes.

This is not to downplay the economic dislocations that make the Maharashtrians susceptible to the scapegoating in which the Shiv Sena and other parties have engaged. According to one report, the numbers of registered job seekers in the Bombay–Thane belt rose from 160,000 to 3.5 million between 1961 and 1990, with higher proportions of educated unemployed (between 3 and 4 per cent) than were registered in many other urban areas of India (Sainath 1993).[23] But even as these processes of economic change

[22] On the Mythology of Muslim minorities being 'pampered', see Rahul Pathak with Vivian Fernandes, 'Nailing the Big Lie', *India Today*, 31 January 1993, p. 42.

[23] The State Directorate of Economics and Statistics records unemployment (job seekers listed with the employment exchange registry) as growing from 250,000 in 1985–6 to 330,000 in April 1994. The consumer price index for agricultural labourers also rose sharply between the end of the 1980s and the mid-1990s. See 'Maharashtra: Mixed Record, Negative Image', *India Today*, 31 January 1996: p. 47. It is interesting, too, that Maharashtra has a higher percentage of people living in urban areas (39 per cent) than is true elsewhere. The average in India generally is 26 per cent, Vora 'Shift of Power',

are unsettling, they cannot on their own explain the pull towards a political agenda of religious nationalism. These economic conditions cannot by themselves explain (a) why Muslims are targeted or (b) why leftist political organizations in Maharashtra have been less successful at responding to the frustrations of the educated youth.[24]

The Shiv Sena's turn to Hindutva and the demonization of Muslims in the 1990s was traceable, then, less to economic conditions than to discursive possibilities. By the mid-to late 1980s, a number of events heightened the salience of religious identities. The Shah Bano case (which raised the issue of whether a Muslim divorced woman claiming support was entitled to a hearing under the uniform civil code) had become a political football stirring Hindu–Muslim tensions throughout North India as had the Ram Janmabhoomi temple–Babri Masjid dispute. Video and tape recordings of the speeches of Hindu nationalist leaders were widely disseminated. In the second half of the 1980s, the discourse of Hindutva had made its presence felt throughout North India.

The responsiveness to the Shiv Sena's exploitation of this new discourse seemed to surprise even Shiv Sena leaders themselves. As Sudhir Joshi, a long-time Sena leader exclaimed:

> We don't know how it happened. But the Sena is getting a tremendous response from people from all walks of life. They seem to have caught on with our concept of Hindu rashtra.[25]

The sense of satisfaction among the Shiv Sena leaders that, at long last, their appeal to Hindu nationalist loyalties had gotten a hearing among the Maharashtrian populace was transparent. As Thackeray commented, 'Earlier, Hindutva was regarded as narrow-minded and the Sena was called communal for projecting this

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op. cit., p. 172. See also, P. Sainath, Video of Talk Delivered After 1992–3 Riots. Available with Mary Katzenstein, Department of Government, Corwell University.

[24] The leftist alliance of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in the 1950s did not frame their demand for a separate state in 'mere' class politics terms. They also engaged in ethnic stereotyping, if less overt and extreme than the rhetoric and actions of the language of the Hindu Mahasabha/Shiv Sena and other parties on the right.

[25] Uma Keni Prabhu, 'Shiv Sena Riding the Tiger', *Bombay*, 7–21 August 1988, p. 6.

feeling'. Now, to paraphrase the Shiv Sena chief, its power is recognized and this kind of nationalism is considered legitimate.[26]

If the 1980s construction of Hindutva was the first time after independence that Hinduism was linked to nationalism, one of the cognitive mechanisms by which this was accomplished in the Shiv Sena's writings was through the demonization of 'anti-national Muslim'. Over and over in the pages of *Saamna* as well as in speeches by Thackeray and by some of the other party leaders, the denigration of Muslims is repeated in phraseologies that invoke the real or imagined *political* identities and claims of the minority and majority communities.

> How can Congress pamper this minority community?
> What right do Burkha-clad women have to vote?[27]
> Why should Muslims be exempt from a uniform civil code?
> How can Muslims loyal to Pakistan be tolerated?

Again and again, the Shiv Sena conjures up images of Muslim treachery and betrayal. In inflammatory language, the Shiv Sena depicts anti-national Muslims as destroyers of temples, as murderers of the police, and as threats to the Indian state. In Thackeray's words (from *Saamna*):

> Muslims revolt in their own areas. They beat Hindus, demolish temples and attack the police. The government is appeasing these traitors. It is learnt that Pakistan has manufactured seven bombs. But the bomb that has been made in India with the blessings of Pakistan is more dangerous. Now Pakistan need not cross the borders for launching an attack on India. Twenty-five crore Muslims loyal to Pakistan will stage an insurrection. One of these seven bombs made by Pakistan lies hidden in Hindustan.[28]

[26] 'Strategic End to Thackeray Drive', *Times of India*, 26 February 1990, p. 6.

[27] See 'No Polls If Burkha-clad Exercise Franchise, says Thackeray', *The Indian Express*, 13 March 1994. The article quotes Thackeray: '"In the ensuing elections if the Election Commission allows burkha-clad women of minority community to exercise their franchise, then Sena will not allow elections to be held, not only in Maharashtra, but in the entire country", Thackeray thundered'.

[28] Women, Law and the Media Workshop, 'Shifting Boundaries', Annexure H, Organized by the Centre for Feminist Legal Research in association with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, 22–8 October 1994 (Delhi: Jamia Hamdard, 1994).

Using the practiced semantic formula of its Maharashtrian xenophobic days, the Shiv Sena insists it is not anti-Muslim, just against anti-nationalist Muslims. In earlier days, the Shiv Sena also used to insist that, as a movement, it was not against non-Maharashtrians, only against those who did not 'share the joys and sorrows' of Maharashtrians, a definition, however, that was of little comfort to the Udipi restaurant owner whose establishment was about to be burned by marauding youths or the Tamil clerk whose job the Shiv Sena claimed belonged to the Maharashtrians.[29] Asked to define or describe Muslims who are known to be anti-nationalist, Thackeray invariably talks of Muslims who have 'their heart in Pakistan'.[30] How are these Muslims to be identified from others who may be loyal citizens of India? Repeatedly, Thackeray's answer summons up the sports stadium.[31] Anti-national Muslims are those who set off firecrackers of victory when Pakistan defeats India in the stadiums of Bombay.[32]

[29] Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality*, op. cit., p. 26.

[30] Thackeray typically says things such as 'an ordinary peace-loving Muslim has nothing to fear'. Those who 'have their heart in Pakistan' will not be spared. See 'Sena Pledges Probe into Pawar's Conduct', *The Times of India*, 31 January 1995, p. 5.

[31] Thackeray, in a 'populist' measure designed to attract wide attention, demanded the cancellation of a one-day international cricket match between India and Pakistan scheduled at Wankhede stadium, threatening to organize a Bombay Bandh if the Cricket Association did not cancel. The chief minister, S. Naik, initially firm on his stand against Thackeray's threat, began to soft-pedal. Eventually the Pakistan team declined to play and the match was cancelled. See Rajdeep Sardesai and Prakash Joshi's article in *The Times of India*, 27 October 1991 as well as the extensive coverage between 23 October and the end of the month.

[32] Namita Bhandare, 'Courting Trouble', *Sunday*, 19–22 April 1995, p. 24. In a typical interview, Thackeray will make exceptions for individual Muslims. 'My inner voice', he says, for instance, 'tells me that Sunjay Dutt is not involved in the bomb blasts'. Why? Because Thackeray knows Dutt's parents personally and knows they are loyal Indian patriots. Thackeray also repeatedly comments that he is not anti-Muslim. 'I am willing to cooperate and help solve their problems. But I would like them to come forward and join the national mainstream. It is not in the interests of any religious group to have large numbers of aliens staying in their midst.' Thackeray insists he is only against Muslim 'traitors'. 'A traitor is a traitor whichever religion he belongs to. If I were the Prime Minister, I would gun down a Hindu, a Muslim, or a Sikh if it is proved that he is a traitor. What is wrong with that?' (S. Balakrishnan,

As in its earlier days when the Shiv Sena would cite its support of individual South Indian—such as General Cariappa, the Sena's candidate for parliament—as evidence that the party was not xenophobic, the Sena now defends its record by referring to its patronage of individual Muslims. An interview with Shabir Shaikh, the one Muslim in the Sena-BJP state cabinet, is indicative of what such endorsement requires. Calling himself 'a Hindustani and therefore a Hindutvavadi', Shaikh says that 'Hindutva has nothing to do with religion; it is the culture of India'. Shaikh has been with the Sena since its founding, claiming to have been drawn to the party because of its championing of Maharashtrians. 'I am an Indian first, Maharashtrian second, and Muslim last', Shaikh explains. After 29 years with the Sena, Shaikh says, he is still Muslim and still proud of his religion. As if by rote, Shaikh responds to an interviewer's query about how he can live with the virulence that the Sena is directing against Muslims by saying, canonically, that the Shiv Sena is only against anti-national Muslims. His definition of an anti-national Muslim is: 'One who bursts crackers when Pakistan wins against India in a cricket match'. When asked by the reporter how many Muslims actually do this, Shaikh says that it may be less than one per cent, but the point is that the other 99 per cent do not come out in opposition to this practice.[33] These conversations reveal the Shiv Sena's use of the standard technique of social control—the distinction between the 'good Negro' and 'bad Blacks'—between the well-behaved and compliant, on the one hand, and the obstreperous, on the other hand. Good Muslims are those who are personally known to Shiv Sena leaders as being patriotic, those who denounce 'bad' Muslims, or those who are vocal in their declarations of patriotism.

This demonization of anti-national Muslims is one of the four definitional pillars in the construction of the Shiv Sena's version of Hindutva. A second pillar is built on the connection between Hinduism and militancy and a distinction between weak and strong proselytes of nationalism. Hindu nationalism, for the Sena, must be a militant nationalism. Non-violence is weakness, not strength. Bal Thackeray, who has rarely been contradicted by other

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'I'm Not Opposed to Muslims, Says Thackeray', *The Times of India*, 31 March 1995).

[33] 'A Suitable Hindutvadai', *The Times of India*, 26 March 1995, p. 15.

Sena leaders in this regard, is a vehement critic of Gandhian non-violence. To Thackeray, Gandhi's non-violence and supposed appeasement of Muslims is anathema. This highly masculinist rhetoric no doubt pulls young men towards the Sena. It is not surprising that, by one report, a full *two-thirds* of all Shiv Sena–BJP supporters are male.[34]

The paragon of a political leader, rather, is represented by Shivaji, known for his martial exploits against the Muslim rulers of the North. Thackeray's admiration for Adolph Hitler is also widely cited in interviews. When asked by a reporter for the *Illustrated Weekly of India* whether Hitler really exemplified his model of a nationalist leader, Thackeray demurs about the extremes to which Hitler went but speaks admiringly of Hitler's love of the nation.[35] Gandhi, for Thackeray, is just one leader, not even

[34] Palshikar, 'Capturing the Moment', op. cit., p. 175. In a speech at an election rally at the Alka Talkies square in Pune, Thackeray commented on Gandhi's assassination: 'We are proud of Nathuram. He saved the country from second partition. Nathuram was not a hired assassin. He was genuinely infuriated by Mahatma Gandhi's betrayal of the nation. Killing of any person is necessarily an evil act and it should be condemned. But we must find out the reasons behind such incidents. Mahatma Gandhi betrayed the nation. He had said he would lay down his life before allowing the division of the country. But ultimately he did nothing to stop the partition. Moreover, he insisted on giving Rs 55 crore to Pakistan at a time when the country was ravaged....' ('Thackeray lauds Godse', *The Indian Express*, 17 May 1991).

[35] See 'The Tiger Roars Again', *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 19 February 1989, pp. 30–3. One interviewer asked Thackeray whether he had changed his mind over the years about Hitler as a model. Thackeray replied: '"Yes, I haven't changed my mind. Hitler wanted his country to come up and he thought, "What are the reasons?" He found corruption was the main thing. Then he asked, "Who are the people doing it?" It was the Jews, yes the Jews. Now I like some Jews, they have a warrior-like thing. Even the girls are sitting in the trenches and fighting against the enemy. I want that spirit in my country. But Hitler found that not only were they the corrupt people but they also didn't behave. He realized "that if I don't drive them out, then my country won't come up". You may condemn that kind of act—even I would condemn. It is not the only way; this gas chamber and all. I don't like. But you may drive them out—things like that. It is all right. But don't blame the man. He wanted to bring his country up and he knew what were the evils"' (*The Weekly Interview*: Bal Thackeray 'I Still Believe in Dictatorship', *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 19 February 1984, pp. 30–3).

to be acknowledged as the father of the Indian nation. A true national leader, for Thackeray, is one who will 'inject militancy, into the Hindu blood'.[36]

To this self-educated Sena leader, whose economic circumstances precluded the possibility of attending university, it is action rather than reflection that seems to be life-motivating. In his younger days, Thackeray saw few Hindi films, but he used to 'be mad after cowboy pictures. Every week, my brother and I would go to Aurora cinema and see a cowboy picture.... I like action, everything should have action. Yes—John Wayne, Gary Cooper and gun fights. I like gun-fights. Perhaps, it might have influenced me'.[37]

Action gets prime attention in the pages of *Saamna*. Reporting on the Ayodhya crusade, the *Saamna* article asks: 'How does our Shiv Sainik appear as he is marching towards Ayodhya? Like the roaring lion spreading terror, with the gait of an intoxicated elephant, like the assault of a rhino which reduces to powder a rocky mountain, like the manoeuvres of a leopard: Our infinite blessings to these Hindu warriors who are marching towards Ayodhya' (5 December 1992, p. 1).

If the second pillar of Hindutva for the Shiv Sena, then, is militancy, the third pillar is patriotism. Hindutva, in the Shiv Sena's vista, is about religious nationalism, with 'nationalism' the operative word. But the nation which the Shiv Sena reconstructs from the historical past is one that is free of Muslim rule rather than one that is unburdened from the yoke of Western colonialism. There is very little talk in rallies or in the pages of *Saamna* of British colonialism or of present-day exploitation by the West. The Shiv Sena leaders have travelled little outside India and none were educated abroad. Bal Thackeray was in his fifties before he undertook to travel abroad. And when he did, he travelled briefly to London and then to Disneyland. 'You know I had always dreamt of going to Disneyland. It is fantastic'.

Whether because of or in spite of this limited experience of life abroad, there is little animus in Shiv Sena speeches and publications when it comes to questions about the imposition of Western values. The chief minister, Manohar Joshi, was counselled by

[36] *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 19 February 1989, p. 33.
[37] Vir Sanghvi, 'I still Believe in Dictatorship', op. cit., pp. 30–1.

Thackeray against wearing a suit and tie on his recent trip to the United States, but it was one of the rare situations in which Joshi could openly joke about not acquiescing to the wishes of the Senapati, indicating the relative insignificance of this stricture.[38] The Sena's sponsorship of the Michael Jackson extravaganza in Bombay, which was intended to raise 40 million rupees for the Sena's 'non-profit' trust, the *Udyog Sena*, destroyed any semblance of the Sena critique of the assault on Indian culture by the decadent West.[39] [The Sena–BJP combine has given more serious attention to reclaiming the 'authentic' name of Mumbai (after Mumbadevi, the goddess worshipped traditionally by the fisher folk of Bombay).] But such examples aside, there is surprisingly little talk about Western colonization and unwelcome influence. In all the recent discussions of the Enron power project contract, in fact, the Sena's opposition has been formulated as one about overpricing and the faulty procedures of negotiating a contract without open bidding. Missing is the strong rhetoric about national autonomy and freedom from foreign control that attended the Janata's ouster of Coca-Cola and IBM in the late 1970s.

Religion is the fourth pillar of Shiv Sena's conceptualization of Hindutva, but its importance is less scriptural or doctrinal than ritualistic. On occasion, a speech by a Sena leader will invoke religious texts, and a Sena leader will be accompanied on the dais by a religious ascetic. Pramod Navalkar, one of the Sena leaders with a more outwardly spiritual bent, has brought Hindu holy men to address Sena gatherings. In rallies and on the occasion of electoral victories, Thackeray typically appears in saffron (or other) draped robes of an ascetic—recently with wooden holy beads and wrist bands (*rudrakshas*). It is telling, however, that after the death of his wife and son in 1996, Thackeray removed his beads and banished all pictures and statues of gods from his residence. According to one report that cites an editorial by Thackeray in *Saamna*, Thackeray has declared himself an atheist.[40]

[38] See Nirmal Mitra, 'Chief Minister Indulges in His Native Marathi', *India Abroad*, 30 June 1995, p. 12. News articles comment on the chief minister and the Sena party in the legislature operating by remote control. Manohar Joshi says his relationship to Thackeray is like father to son.

[39] Saira Menezes, 'Sena's History Reversed', *Outlook*, 6 November 1996, p. 20.

[40] 'Uneasy Lies the Head', *The Telegraph*, 20 July 1996.

It is significant that Thackeray's declaration seems to have caused no stir among the Shiv Sena subscribers to the party's brand of religious nationalism.

Where religion seems mostly to count is in its performative and ritualistic role: the local *shakhas* are intensely involved in the annual Bombay Ganesh or Ganapati ritual (Ganesh *chatoorthi*). On this festival day, when the image of Ganapati is marched to the sea, Shiv Sainiks and Sena flags are visible in every neighbourhood. In some ways this event has become a Sena festivity and, as we shall discuss below, an important means to raise funds for party activity. Recently, and even more significantly, the Sena has organized *maha-aartis* in the streets. These convocations are partly in response to Muslim *namaaz* (prayers that are held sometimes on the streets and in public places). During the 1992–3 violence, maha aartis were explicit tools by which youthful crowds were incited to act collectively, leading to the rampages and violent assaults against Muslim residents.

It is difficult to characterize the Sena's cultural vision of Hinduism as either reformist or conservative. Sudhir Joshi, one of the more modern-minded Sena leaders, tends to emphasize the forward-looking cast of Hinduism: 'The Hinduism of the four Varnas is not acceptable to us, being regressive. We do not believe in a religion on that basis. What we are talking about is a Hinduism that is rational, reformist, practical and evolving. We reject *Sati* and its propagandists. We reject even dowry as a barbarism'.[41] But this reformist voice is not the dominant line enunciated by Thackeray. Although the Sena in recent elections has sought support from particular *dalit* communities (Chamars, Dhors, and Bhangis), it "has targeted the projects of other (better-off) dalits, largely ex-Mahars, criticizing the effort to rename Marathwada University as Ambedkar University and the publication of Ambedkar's writings, in which the Sena considered his comments on Ram and Krishna to be offensive.[42] Thackeray sees neo-Buddhist dalit activists as anti-Hindu and therefore uses a rhetorical style similar to that which he deploys when he talks of Muslims: 'Today is the anniversary of Ambedkar. We won't be tolerant. Its over, burnt.

[41] Mahesh Vijapurkar, 'Shiv Sena; the Hindu Card', *Frontline*, 21 January 1989, p. 100.

[42] Lele, 'Saffronisation of Shiv Sena', op. cit., p. 1526.

If anyone stands against Hindus, we'll burn them to ashes'.[43] Indeed, the Shiv Sena, on more than a few occasions, has targeted Dalit neighbourhoods during the binges of violence led by Sena youth.

To summarize: The importance of discursive change should not be underestimated. This transposition from an organization that protested the incursion of non-Maharashtrians into Bombay to one that speaks, principally, about the restoration of a Hindu political order should, rightly, be named as what it is—a major discursive gyration. The discursive handiwork of the Shiv Sena is now visible in the form of a four-pillar doctrine of Hindutva built on Muslim demonization, on the militancy of Hinduism, on a political nationalism defined by regional rather than global enemies, and on the restitution of specified religious rituals. What should be recognized to be at work here is not the rumblings of new economic or societal tectonic formations creating new fault lines to which political élites must respond, but the recreation of existing meanings in response to new ideological or discursive opportunities.

Deploying Hindutva: The Power of Institutions

It would be problematic to claim, however, that this new discourse was, by itself, responsible for the Shiv Sena's recent political success or for the unprecedented eruption of communal violence in Bombay in 1992–3. To look to the discourse of Hindu nationalism alone would leave us unable to explain why the BJP could not expect to supplant the Shiv Sena, but was rather compelled to join hands with it in an electoral alliance. Discourse alone cannot explain why Hindu–Muslim hostilities, which have long been present in Bombay, in Maharashtra, and elsewhere in India, should erupt in such a particularly virulent form at this time. To answer these questions, we must turn to the adroit organization-building that the Shiv Sena can boast of and to the concomitant, at least current, infirmity of the local Congress party and of state institutions. Central to this discussion is the Shiv Sena's

[43] Anand Patwardhan, *Father Son and Holy War* (New York: First Run/Icarus Films, 1994).

determination to use coercive and terrorizing tactics and the inability or unwillingness of the government to respond.

A modern-day Machiavelli might advise his ruler that political success requires the creation of institutions that will secure (1) enough riches to rule; (2) influence over the modes of popular communication; (3) firm control over the rulers' own party or power base; and (4) the capacity to deliver something of what the populace perceives its needs to be. By these criteria, Shiv Sena has demonstrated mastery in the craft of party building.

1. The Shiv Sena has clearly accumulated vast coffers of funds—no small feat for a party that has been, for most of its political life, not in power, but in opposition. Almost no hard information exists in print about the source of these funds, but there is enough anecdotal commentary to allow some picture to be sketched. According to numerous commentaries, the Congress party was itself responsible in the early days of the Shiv Sena for building up the party coffers, hoping that the Shiv Sena would prove a strong counteractive force to the leftist unions. The close relations between the Congress and Shiv Sena, Sainath claims, won the Shiv Sena the epithet Vasant Sena (alluding to the alleged linkages between the then chief minister, Vasant Rao Naik, and the Shiv Sena). Similar observations were routinely made about the support the Shiv Sena was supposed to have received from industrial houses in Bombay that shared the Congress party interest in seeing the leftist unions weakened. In recent years, what has been widely recognized is the huge intake of funds the Shiv Sena secures from its control over the Bombay real estate—said to be among the highest priced urban real estate outside Japan. Part of this control has been secured through the Shiv Sena's victory in the municipal elections, giving the party access to the municipal budget, which, as others have commented, is larger than the revenue coffers of many states. This control ranges from the capacity of the Shiv Sena to collect a few rupees from stall owners (protection money) to its ability to tithe large corporations that wish to gain access to office or factory space. What seem to be absolutely routine party practices are the neighbourhood collections for 'religious festivals' by party shakhas and the extortion of security money. The role of coercion here is key: whether, it is the Shiv Sena's ability to approach a business owner after the riot with a demand for 50,000 rupees as

payment for having prevented the business from being destroyed, or whether it is a demand for several rupees from a small-time Muslim trader, extortion is the primary vehicle by which the party coffers are filled.

2. The Shiv Sena's media clout reflects the confluence of the party's organizational acumen and its terrorist tactics. Absolutely crucial to the party's early successes was the broadcasting of employee lists in the party's own paper, *Marmik*. Critical to the dissemination of Hindutva has been the capacity of the party to spread its message through its own daily newspaper, *Saamna*, first published in 1989 in Marathi and then expanded into a Hindi edition in 1993. *Saamna* is said to have an enormous circulation of between 150,000 to 300,000 copies.[44] This circulation depends on a highly sophisticated distribution network, which provides for papers to be sold at regular newspaper outlets as well as on railway platforms and street corners. Here, too, the Shiv Sena's coercive organizational apparatus is fundamental to the party's capacity to broadcast its party doctrine. By utilizing tactics of intimidation against rival Marathi papers—and less directly against the English language dailies—the Shiv Sena has endeavoured (with no small effect) to stifle its critics. Some of the large-circulation Marathi newspapers pose no worry to the Shiv Sena. But several Marathi dailies such as the *Mahanagar*, which has been directly critical of the Shiv Sena, have been the target of frightening violent assaults. The *Mahanagar* offices have been repeatedly ransacked and journalists beaten. In 1993, a counter-demonstration to protest the Sena's tactics was planned, and a procession was taken out by a group of sympathetic journalists close to the Shiv Sena's Dadar headquarters. As the procession disbanded, four members of the procession were injured, one receiving a skull fracture. Specific journalists have been individually targeted for intimidation.[45] The home of Haroon Rashid of the newspaper *Blitz* was attacked and all his possessions were burned, including 3000 books and the diaries he had been safe-guarding for the purpose of later compiling an autobiography. The effect of this

[44] Lekha Rattanani, 'Paper Tiger', *India Today*, 28 February 1995, p. 28.

[45] V. K. Ramchandran, 'The Press Protest', *Frontline*, 8 October 1993, pp. 109–10.

incident and of the Shiv Sena's terrorist tactics more generally have been an understandable self-censoring by the media.[46]

3. The multilayer institutional structure of the Shiv Sena and the party's close control over its own organization is renowned. The party is run autocratically. There are no internal party elections and votes are never taken. There are four institutional components to the party: the newspapers (*Saamna* and *Marmik*); the shakhas or branch offices; the employment organization; and the Sena unions. The neighbourhood shakhas (220 in Bombay) are connected to informal networks, mostly of young men, who are linked through family, school, neighbourhood, and athletic clubs or mandals. The party also runs another layer of organization, the *Sthaniya Lokadhikar Samiti* (SLS), variously described as a cultural club and an employment exchange. The SLS, reportedly, has 325 units spread throughout the state.[47] Although there is now talk of others (Bal Thackeray's son and nephew) being trained to succeed the Sena domo, control over the party, and, to an extent, governmental affairs, is tightly managed by Bal Thackeray himself. No major party positions are reached without consultation with Thackeray, including policy decisions that are now taken by the Shiv Sena–BJP combine in the state legislature. In a recent row, the Sena chief minister signed a memorandum of understanding with the Hinduja business group regarding a feasibility study for a new Bombay international airport. Done without Thackeray's approval, the signing angered the Sena chief who made his ire known in *Saamna*. The story was then picked up by the English press. According to a *Times of India* report, 'Mr Thackeray sent an unambiguous message that the latter's commitment to the Sena is more important than his brief as the chief executive of the state'.[48]

[46] The controversy over the film *Bombay* has also been revealing. Thackeray was allowed to review the film and make recommendations for editorial changes a number of which were carried out. Although Muslim leaders also objected to aspects of the film, similar editorial changes were apparently not made. Recently, too, a paper in Aurangabad, *Lokmat*, was attacked, allegedly by Shiv Sena workers because of its critique of a Sena leader. Four employees were injured, machines were destroyed, and files were torched ('Four Employees of Lokmat Hurt in Shiv Sena Attack', *The Times of India*, 10 June 1995, p. 1).

[47] 'Native Appeal', *India Today*, 28 February 1995, p. 29.

[48] 'Anti-Joshi Remarks Upset Alliance', *The Times of India*, 29 June 1995, p. 13.

Leadership control over the ranks is said, now, to be less efficacious than in earlier years. As Rajdeep Sardesai aptly describes the Shiv Sena:

> Although on the surface it seems as if Thackeray is in total control of his 'boys', the fact is that many of them are now doing their own thing within their respective spheres of influence. Thackeray's charisma may still be an important mobilizing factor but a number of new recruits to the Sena are only using the Thackeray name to start their own private enterprises. Many of them are youth in the under-35 group who have little commitment to the party as such.[49]

Gerard Heuzé, too, notes the decline of what he rightfully says is the still-much-underestimated social service function of the shakhas and its replacement by a sort of gangster/underworld element more interested in the prosperity to be won from trading in contraband and illicit goods than in the service to neighbourhood and community.[50]

4. A part of the Shiv Sena's appeal has always been rooted in the way the shakhas provide a place for the youth to be engaged in activities, whether in service to the community or in party campaign issues. The neighbourhood-based programmes for women (the crèches, income-generating projects like food preparation, and cultural festivals like *haldi-kumkum*) are specifically aimed at mobilizing women locally.[51] It is also the case that local corporators and even state legislators are electable, based to a large

[49] Sardesai, 'The Shiv Sena's New Avatar', op. cit., p. 133.

[50] Gerard Heuzé, 'Cultural Populism: The Appeal of the Shiv Sena' in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner (eds), *Bombay*, op. cit.

[51] The journalist Teesta Setalvad recounts an interesting anecdote about a woman who returned to Bombay after being employed in Saudi Arabia as a domestic worker. The woman, exploited by her employers, approached a feminist organization in the city for help. The feminist group was unable to galvanize either the Indian government or the Saudi Arabian embassy to assist the woman. When the woman approached the Shiv Sena, their women's wing, the Mahila Aghadi, went to the employer's house, 'threatened him with his life', and recovered her back wages. Teesta Setalvad, 'The Women Shiv Sainik and Her Sister Swayamsevika', in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (eds), *Women and the Hindu Right* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1995), p. 239. Also see Sikata Banerjee, 'Hindu Nationalism and the Construction of Women: The Shiv Sena Organizes in Bombay' in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Bhutalia (eds), *Women and the Hindu Right*, op. cit., p. 223.

extent on whether they are perceived as serving the interests of people in the constituency. Newspaper coverage of the 1995 campaign for the most part reported the prevalence of many of the same issues of daily living that overwhelm much of the low-income Bombay electorate. In one of the Bombay neighbourhoods known as Worli, the news account reviews the competing claims between the Shiv Sena and Congress candidates about who has done more for the constituency in terms of spending funds on housing, 'beautification', and opposing the sale of mill land.[52] Only in a few accounts does the report indicate the issues such as education, water, sanitation, and roads were forced into the background by the legacy of the 1992–3 riots. In one of these accounts, the Sena candidate (half-heartedly supported by the BJP, according to the newspaper coverage) had been earlier arrested under the National Security Act during the riots and later had been held for alleged extortion.[53] Whether the Shiv Sena's past reputation at the local level for being committed 'social workers' will be eclipsed by a reputation for gangesterism is likely to have significant effect on electoral contests in the future.

The Shiv Sena, organizationally, appears to be something of a contradiction. On the one hand, it heavily depends on the magnetism and autocratic style of a single leader. On the other hand, it is constituted of a complex, multilayered set of institutions that are sufficiently dispersed so as not to be fully accountable to the party leadership. On the one hand, the party has had a reputation for being less corrupt than the Congress has been by recent reputation (as we address below). On the other hand, the party is widely known for its fear-inducing and extortionist practices. On the one hand, Sainiks at the local level have been seen as active party workers with a commitment to social service; on the other hand, there are wide reports of criminal elements pervading the party ranks. Corruption charges against the Sena brought by Anna Hazare, accusations that the Sena involvement led to the death of Ramesh Kini, the emerging criticism of Thackeray in several of the Marathi newspapers during the last months of 1996, and the reported increase of gangsterism at the

[52] Meena Menon, 'Straight Contest in Worli and Naigaum', *The Times of India*, 9 February 1995, p. 5.

[53] Anil Singh, 'Dharavi Constituency May Witness Triangular Contest', *The Times of India*, February 1995, p. 5.

shakha level of the Sena organization indicate that the party's organizational coherence may be faltering. But at least to date, as we shall explore in the next section, these contradictions have not obstructed the Shiv Sena's expansion both in the realm of elections and as a party that commands an ever-widening notice.

The Elections and the 1992–3 Conflagration

It would be impossible to understand either the 1992–3 post-Ayodhya tragedy in Bombay or the Sena–BJP victory in the 1995 elections as a function of either discursive power or institutional processes alone. Only as discourse and institutions operate together can these two events be understood.

What characterized at least the second round of violence in January 1993 were the inflammatory communalist words of the Shiv Sena and the presence of youthful activists at the sites of the violence. The translations of *Saamna* editorials presented as court documents make patent the explosive character of the Sena's language. From the 9 January 1993 editorial:

> The Hindu does not lose heart in misery, adversity or confrontation. On the contrary, he retaliates.... We cannot be silent peace keepers.... Those Muslims who have put this nation on auction, are appeased by Government in self surrender. But we are not prepared to let the pigeons of peace fly in the sky. Our brethren are dying in agony for no reason. The Hindus have to write their future right now. We must keep the fire burning. The night is dominated by the enemy.[54]

From the 14 January 1993 editorial:

> Although we have stopped our *dharam yuddh*, everything will depend on how the government tackles antinationals.... Everyone knows their place now.[55]

But to see the riots as the result of verbal provocations alone underplays the importance of institutional contexts. Neither the state nor the Congress party has been prepared to apply punitive measures, either in the form of closing down the Sena's journals,

[54] Women, Law and Media Workshop, 'Shifting Boundaries', op. cit., Exhibit.

[55] Sainath, Video of Talk Delivered, op. cit.

by jailing the Sena leadership, or by, it seems, the deploying of punitive police powers in curbing the rioters. Although numerous proceedings have been initiated against Bal Thackeray and others in the Shiv Sena, no court or legislative actions had restricted Thackeray or *Saamna*'s use of inflammatory language. On 27 September 1994, the Bombay High Court dismissed a public interest petition filed by J. B. D'Souza and Dilip Thakore asking for a court direction to the Government of Maharashtra to prosecute Bal Thackeray and Sanjay Raut, executive editor of *Saamna*. In January 1995, the Supreme Court also dismissed the special leave petition against the High Court ruling, precipitating a harsh critique from several eminent lawyers and retired judges, including H. M. Seervai, Nani Palkhivala, and Soli Sorabjee.[56] During the winter session of 1994, the privileges committee of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly proposed that Thackeray be punished by a short jail sentence for an objectionable article, but the session lapsed before any action could be taken. During the riots themselves, moreover, the lower echelons of the police were seen as partial to the Sena.[57] The government leadership was criticized for playing politics (as confusion arose as to the role of Defence Minister Sharad Pawar and Chief Minister Suddhakarao Naik). Caught between the critiques of Muslims and the Shiv Sena, the state remained indecisive. The lesson here seemed to be that the Shiv Sena could issue directives and action would follow, but that the judiciary and the government were immobilized by ambivalence as to how to proceed. The provocation of the Sena's language thus was supported by the weakness of institutional controls.

The Sena's march to dominance in the state assembly in alliance with the BJP in 1995 is similarly a result of both Hindu nationalist appeals and institutional processes. As Rajdeep Sardesai astutely recounts, the Sena came back from its 1975–85 exile with a strong showing in the 1985 municipal elections, largely thanks to infighting within the Congress party. Its electoral foray beyond Bombay was facilitated by its efforts to broaden its caste base and by the role

[56] The recently founded journal, *Communalism Combat*, edited by Javed Anand and Teesta Setalvad, has tracked these issues carefully. The journal's address is P. O. Box 28253, Juhu Post Office, Mumbai 400049.

[57] Rahman, 'Primed for Battle', op. cit., p. 35.

played by Chhaggan Bhujbal before he left the Sena for the Congress, but its use of Hindutva appeals was absolutely low key. The Sena's first major victory outside the Bombay area was in Aurangabad in 1988, where the party fought the election utilizing the language of dharam yuddh. The Sena's alliance with the BJP in anticipation of the 1990 Assembly elections reflected the party's recognition that the Ram Janmabhoomi momentum had caught popular attention. The acceptance of a Hindu nationalist framework within a significant section of the population is most evident in the fact that despite the Shiv Sena's self-proclaimed participation in the Bombay riots of 1992–3, Bombay voters returned the alliance in 1995 with a thumping victory of 30 out of 34 seats in the metropolis.

But institutional factors were clearly critical in the 1995 election. As Rajendra Vora rightly observes, the Sena–BJP alliance gained 44 seats (over 1990) by virtue of a mere rise of 2.64 per cent of the popular vote. As Vora remarks, the single most important factor in the Congress party's loss of seats was the presence in many of the 288 constituencies of rebel Congress candidates.[58] In the 1995 election, factionalism within the Congress ranks, the attack on the Congress for corruption and for links with the underworld, and the disillusionment among some of the traditional Congress constituencies were a significant part of the Shiv Sena–BJP victory.[59]

Some observers of the recent events in Bombay/Maharashtra might contend that to reduce the narrative of the Shiv Sena to any single story is problematic. Although the Shiv Sena may appear to trade in Hindu–Muslim hostilities, other narratives might also be told: about urban anomie; about the death of the Nehru era and the quest for new identities; about the crisis of capitalism diverted into inter-community violence; about the Congress party factionalism; and about a multiplicity of caste, class, and ethnic

[58] Vora, 'Shift of Power', op. cit., pp. 171–2.

[59] The Jalgaon sex scandal also played a role in discrediting the Congress. In the MARG poll, corruption issues seemed to be where the anti-Congress sentiment were most directly focused. A number of reports also comment on Muslim alienation from the Congress, perceiving the Congress to have been ineffective protectors of Muslims during the 1992–3 violence. See, for instance, Gunvanthi Balaram, 'Sena Nominee May Romp Home in Mahim', *The Times of India*, 4 February 1995, p. 5; 'W. Maharashtra Only Hope for Congress', *The Times of India*, 8 February 1995, p. 15.

issues encased in a patina of politicized religious identities. Still other observers might argue that this turn to Hindutva is in a sense no different from previous waves of group confrontations (Samyukta Maharashtra, sons-of-the-soil politics), and that their volatility and capacity for destruction will depend on the strengths, first and foremost, of state institutions. While we agree with these observations, our position is that discourses differ in their mobilizational and violence-generating capacities, and that the discourse of religious nationalism needs to be taken particularly seriously. When political leaders call for a dharm yuddh and when shortly thereafter Muslims (in large numbers) and Hindus (in smaller numbers) die at each others' hands, we need to take people at their word and measure them by their deed. This means taking seriously both what people say they mean as well as the institutional processes that translate those interpretations into action.

Conclusion

A few years ago, a *Washington Post* article described Bal Thackeray as 'a man who rules Bombay the way Al Capone ruled Chicago: through fear and intimidation.[60] The analogy is apt, yet lacking. Central to the distinction between the two is that in Bombay in the 1990s, fear and intimidation have been married to a populist discourse—one that elevates the interlacing of religious identity and militant nationalism.

The spread of Hindu nationalism in and beyond Bombay in Maharashtra has depended on the deployment of both discursive and institutional power working symbiotically. The Shiv Sena rose to power on its sons-of-the-soil appeal and, in the early years, built a highly effective array of institutions. On their own, however, this well-organized system of local institutions (its job bureaus, unions, its cartoon weekly, and the shakhas whose service functions have been key to the party's mobilizational efforts), together with the system of intimidation already in place, were not enough to afford the party more than a limited role in Bombay city politics. By the mid-1970s, the party's political fortunes had stalled. When the Shiv Sena shifted its ideological emphasis, however, from a Maharashtrian

[60] John Ward Anderson, 'The Flames that Lit An Inferno', *Washington Post*, 11 August 1993, p. A14.

ethnic appeal to a pan-Hindu religious appeal—linking the party to the already expanding discourse of Hindutva, the party's electoral successes soared.

And yet, it would be misleading to see the Shiv Sena's success as testimony to this transposition of discourse alone. Were that the case, the BJP might well have been able to reap the full benefits of Hindutva without having had to join hands with the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena's organizational strength—the patronage politics its local orgnizational units perform and its capacity to support party activities through its extortionist net spread across Bombay's real estate—provided the party with an advantage denied to the BJP. It would be similarly problematic to see the Bombay conflagration of 1992–3 or the 1995 electoral success of the Shiv Sena–BJP combine as a 'triumph' of religious nationalism pure and simple. To understand these events requires an analysis of the capacities and incapacities of both state and party institutions: neither the judiciary nor the Congress government has been ready to utilize even a modicum of constitutional or police powers, in marked contrast to the violence perpetrated against the Naxalite Left some years ago. The displacement of the Congress party by the Shiv Sena–BJP alliance in the state assembly in 1995 was also rooted in institutional causes. The divisions within the Maharashtrian Congress, the party's own reputation for corruption, its incapacity to present itself as the defender of the powerless and its consequent loss of some of its traditional Muslim and low-caste constituencies were all critical to the party's recent ouster.

Discourse and organizations interact in numerous ways that bear further exploration: it seems likely, for instance, that the cry of dharam yuddh helps to legitimate extortionist pressures on Bombay business owners and shop managers; that the turn to Hindu nationalism alleviates the pressure on Shiv Sena's shakhas and its *Sthaniya Lok Adhikar Samiti* branched to 'deliver' real goods in the form of housing improvements, jobs, and resources; and that the institutional character of democratic politics (the competition between BJP and Shiv Sena) pushes the Sena to outdo its Hindu nationalist rival by claiming a greater militancy of thought and action. Such speculation about the intersection of organizational and discursive power aside, our claim is straightforward: what we have endeavoured to demonstrate is that both discursive and organizational power are at the very least independently but

mutually reinforcing. Without the turn to a discourse of Hindu nationalism, the party would have continued to be a local, Bombay, political entity of not much interest beyond the limits of the metropolis. The converging of Hindutva as a discourse with a set of particular organizational conditions—the Shiv Sena's capacity to deliver services as well as to terrorize and the presently weakened condition of other state and party institutions—has established a new political regime. Within this new framework, there are many possible eventualities, but none that are likely to eclipse, in the near future, the voice of Hindu nationalism.

PART III

Radical Politics and Left Parties

PART III

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9

Communist Politics in Search of Hegemony[+]

JAVEED ALAM

One of the key features of the organized politics of the left in India today is its exceptional concern with fighting the menacing growth of 'communalism', on the one hand, and attempting to be in the forefront as defenders of the national unity of India, on the other. The class battles and struggles for the economic relief to the people as part of the moves to keep the class question as the focal point of politics have been pushed into the background. It is not that the parties of the left are no longer concerned about such questions. Quite the contrary. However, given the extreme unevenness of the spread of their influence, restricted also within a few nationalities where cultural boundaries have acted as effective gatekeepers in checking their growth, and the limited political resources at their disposal, a disproportionate amount of their energies are given to checking the communal menace and fighting the forces with the potential of vivisecting India. The organized left may legitimately argue that there is an implicit class dimension underlying their current concerns in politics. Communalism, being a divisive force, pushes people belonging to the same exploited class into hostile political camps. National disintegration gives strength to national chauvinism, which as it grows erodes the hold of the political parties of the left.

Nonetheless, the stance of the Communist movement today is in sharp contrast with that in the 1960s or during the first decade of independence. Class struggles and protracted economic battles for the exploited and the oppressed were the marked features of

[+] Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998).

its politics then.[1] There was also, therefore, hope and confidence in the future. A sense of being besieged, together with rearguard actions, predominates the politics of the left today; this in spite of considerable growth, even if halting, registered by the communist parties. Such a shift is noticeable in the change in tactics from the united front of left and democratic forces earlier to that of secular and democratic forces from the mid-1980s onwards. Why did such a change come about?

By concentrating on the formative phase of the Communist Party of India (CPI) after independence, I will attempt to see whether this provides some clues towards an understanding of the present condition of the forced retreat from class politics. As this will be the principal concern of this analysis, it may not be out of place to put forward at the very outset the aspect of politics that will be stressed. Crucial to the arguments is the thesis that the Indian communist movement looked at the build-up of the revolutionary potential in Indian society only by, or at least primarily through, working on the state, its institutions, processes and dynamics. Such an orientation to politics in turn led to a withdrawal of attention from society as such—its institutions, values and particular modes of articulation—as direct targets of revolutionary focus. Underlying this sort of conception of politics were two assumptions: first, that to get at the bourgeois state it is sufficient that the state is brought under siege by the exploited and allied classes and secondly, that this class-based mobilization directed against the state is sufficient to transform the outlook of toiling

[1] I have dealt with these shifts in my article 'Political Articulation of Mass Consciousness in Present-Day India', in Zoya Hasan, N. S. Jha, and Rasheeduddin Khan (eds), *The State, Political Processes and Identity: Reflection of Modern India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1989), pp. 237–55. Based on my earlier analysis, I would like to add that the JP Movement in its long-term impact restricted the terrain of the politics of the left and created the political space that allowed for greater manoeuvre by right wing politics. I am not making this as a consequentialist argument. During this period, parties representing the preferences of the ruling classes took to extra-parliamentary politics for the first time; such modes of agitation were the preserve of left and radical opposition till then. In the course of their involvement in extra-parliamentary agitations, these ruling class opposition parties learnt the tactics and modes of seeking allies and isolating them. The Jana Sangh/Bharatiya Janata Party has never left the streets since then.

people into revolutionary consciousness. The error involved in looking at revolutionary politics in this way leads to non-hegemonic conquest; that is, the people who come under Communist rule or influence for long spells may not acquire a socialist consciousness and may, as they free themselves of this influence, revert to earlier modes of thinking and political behaviour. Another concern, if not the primary object, of this analysis is to look at the inner party debates in order to discover the basis for the subsequent three-way split in the Communist movement in India.

Before moving to the central discussion, let us look at an interesting feature of the politics of the left in India today which restricts choices on the kind of united front to look for. Unlike most other countries with sustained electoral politics, there is no organized Socialist party in India today. It has been so for almost fifteen years, since the formation of the Janata party in 1977. Tendencies and factions in the former Socialist parties have since merged into the major centrist political parties or formations. What we therefore have of the politics of the left now is primarily centred around the two main communist parties together with a large number of smaller political formations. All of these, with a few stray exceptions are, barring the Naxalite groups, united in the left front.

Wrong Signals from Telengana

India entered into its independent life as a state with unusual upheavals. We can, however, now see that they were without any epic consequences. By upheavals I do not mean the gruesome communal carnage resulting from the disastrous decisions leading to the partition of the country, but the popular upsurges around radical demands. These upheavals were characterized by a momentum and sweep of quite an unprecedented kind. With hindsight, we can now see that they lacked a pattern; there was no common direction or similarity of purpose, and therefore there was little possibility of unification under a common leadership. They were nevertheless of decisive importance in the elaboration of communist positions in Indian politics. Indeed, within five years, between April 1946 and October 1951, the Communist Party of India had four distinct 'lines', all extremely divergent. What gave these upheavals an illusory revolutionary appearance was the chain reaction

across classes and strata, and social groups that engaged in immediate militant action—from the armed forces and police, on the one had, to peasants and workers and employees, on the other, everyone was on the move across the country. The Communist party saw this as a moment of revolutionary breakthrough. In early 1948, the CPI observed that

> ...the process of disillusionment has been quickened since 15 August, and the upsurge is asserting itself more and more...Never was there so much understanding of the main slogans of the democratic movement; abolition of landlordism and land to the tiller; abolition of autocracy; nationalisation of key industries and a living wage...[2]

Such a reading was based on a firm conviction in the party's abilities to move the masses towards a people's democratic state.

> The Communist party, by exposing the national bourgeois leadership, will accelerate the process of disillusionment of thousands, enabling the democratic front to grow and develop sufficient strength to defeat the bourgeois policies and create the preconditions for the establishment of a democratic state, which will really be an instrument for implementing the full programme of the democratic movement and for simultaneously passing on the socialist construction, without the intermediary stage of capitalism.[3]

From this belief, it was natural for the leadership of the Communist movement to infer that

> The independent strength of the Communist Party of India and the general leftward swing of the people enhance immensely the strength of the left forces and make them the base and spearhead of new unity.[4]

Out of this 'upsurge', one popular movement, the Telengana Armed Struggle, had also grown into a protracted partisan war, akin in some ways to a liberation struggle. The CPI referred to it as 'the revolutionary upheaval'[5] which distinguished it from

[2] *Political Thesis* (adopted at the second Party Congress, 28 February to 6 March 1948), p. 116. All reference to party documents, unless otherwise indicated, are from *Documents of the History of the Communist of India* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House).

[3] Ibid., p. 117.

[4] Ibid., p. 77.

[5] *What is Happening in Hyderabad* (CPI pamphlet, 30 January 1949), p. 3.

what was happening in every other state. Telengana was to become the inspiration for the communist movement in India.

> The solution to this question (United Democratic India) is on the battlefield. The heroic people of Telengana, the great example of their fight against autocracy, not only shows what will happen inside the states, but also what will be the real future of India and Pakistan. That is the way the victorious people must march to freedom and real democracy.
>
> Therefore we respect this battle, this struggle inside Hyderabad, of the people of Hyderabad, as a struggle of new type. We must be proud to say that here at least there is the force that will achieve Indian liberation.[6]

The party goes on to add:

> The question is whether the people will go the Hyderabad way or the Kashmir way; and our duty is to make the people go the Hyderabad way. If we can create this spirit of revolution,...among the masses, among the toiling people, we shall find reaction collapsing like a house of cards.[7]

Developments in Telengana were to become of some importance because they kept sending the wrong signals. The signals were, as we will see, read differently by the contending ideological tendencies in the party, all of which were equally convinced that the revolution was around the corner. All the other major centres of struggle saw a decline after independence, e.g. Tebhaga gave way under communal pressures, the Punnapra–Vayalar struggle was brought down by early 1948 through brutal repressions, the RIN rebellion and other revolts in the army and the police were soon checked, as was the case too with working class struggles and mass unrest. But Telengana was very different.[8] Nine months before the

[6] *Review of the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India* (issued by the politburo of the central committee of the Communist Party of India, March 1948), pp. 201–2.

[7] Ibid., p. 202.

[8] There is considerable literature on the Telangana partisan struggle, but the above account is based on two documents and my prolonged discussions with some activists of the movements. The documents are: (i) *What is Happening in Hyderabad*, op. cit., and (ii) *Hyderabad's Battle for New Democracy is Yours* (Hyderabad State Communist Committee, February 1949); see also P. Sundarayya, *Telengana People's Struggle and Its Lessons* (Calcutta: 1972); *Telengana: Awami Siasat Ka Daur* (in Urdu), Commemoration Volume presented to Ravi Narayan Reddy (Hyderabad: 1983); Artula Ramachandra Reddy, *Telengana Struggle Memoirs* (New Delhi: 1984); Barry Pavier, *Telengana Movement 1944–51* (London: 1981).

entry of the Indian army into Hyderabad, that is immediately after independence, the simple peasant revolt against feudal oppression and Nizam's autocracy had grown into a partisan struggle for liberation. More important than the fact that 2000-plus villages were liberated and base camps established, land redistributed among poor peasants, feudal levies abolished, etc., was the intensification of attacks on Razakars (armed volunteers fighting for Muslim privileges and the Nizam's sovereignty over Hyderabad) and *jagirdars*. The *dalams* (guerilla squads) were enthused by the entirely mistaken impression that the Indian army had entered Hyderabad to free them of the Nizam's oppression and the Razakars' terror. Soon, however, when it was seen that the army was busy reestablishing the old officialdom, rehabilitating the runaway landlords, even some Razakars who now co-opted into the Congress protecting the other Razakars from the wrath of the *dalams*, the peasant armed resistance turned against the Indian army. The *dalams* vigorously attacked the Indian army and fought it with courage. While the entire movement remained confined to the two districts of Warangal and Nalgonda, in the initial phase of the battles against the Indian army the *dalams* did quite well. What is important, however, is that the movement spread to new areas (new *taluqs* and villages within these two districts) and more land was redistributed together with the formation of Soviet-like village councils exercising effective power. These were the signals that convinced the CPI leadership that Telengana was soon going to be the pattern all over the Nizam's state and then for the rest of the country.

Such were the signals as read by the CPI just after the transfer of power. The deceptive simplicity in which the upheavals were viewed is by now quite obvious.

Revolutionary Illusions

One important feature of the nationalist movement in India, which the Communist party never quite comprehended, was that the popular initiatives in that movement went far beyond the limits set by the nationalist leadership. Yet, when the Congress leadership moved in to contain them, the people continued to repose faith in the Congress as the leader of the national movement. The fact was that the people in their struggle were ready to go far beyond

what the Congress wanted, and this brought them closer to radical positions and yet they were not prepared to move into the political parties of the left. This discrepancy between the people's willingness to struggle and their stable political allegiance was a crucial factor during the period around independence. The failure to grasp this deflected the political understanding of the CPI into illusory revolutionary visions, while the Congress became the biggest beneficiary of the great popular upheavals. Besides, misreading the social disturbances as insurrections was one thing, but the CPI compounded matters by refusing to recognize that India had become independent in August 1947. It looked at the transfer of power as the result of unacceptable compromises by the nationalist leadership. It could therefore declare that

> The so-called 'transfer of power' was one of the biggest pieces of political and economic appeasement of bourgeoisie which was necessary to strike a deal over the manpower and resource of a vast territory, though as a junior partner, was the dream of the bourgeoisie and it has realized it. From the standpoint of revolution all that it means is that henceforth the bourgeoisie will guard the colonial order.[9]

This was so because

> The way to bar the revolution, to save the old order, was to purchase the very leaders who were at the head of the national movement....[10]

It went on to add that

> The establishment of the central government headed by Pandit Nehru...does not mean that the Indian people have won either freedom or independence, nor does it insure that they will be moving in the direction of democracy and freedom for Indian people.[11]

Therefore, 'the state it has won is dependent on imperialism and is a satellite state'.[12] There was very little that was negotiable within the range of popular aspirations and demands with a state power that was only a camouflage for the continued exploitation by British finance capital. India continued to be a colony ruled by the 'imperialist–bourgeois–feudal combine'. In such a situation, the party had no choice but to strike at the state power and wage

[9] *Political Thesis*, op. cit., p. 31.
[10] Ibid., p. 15.
[11] Ibid., p. 41.
[12] Ibid., p. 41.

a liberation struggle. The party was not going to shun ordinary parliamentary politics or mass work in front organizations or other elementary forms of protests and agitations. But, as the situation was 'full of revolutionary possibilities',

> the forms of struggle are determined by our strategic objective.... The objective of overthrowing the bourgeoisie combined with the existence of revolutionary period and the rapidly moving revolutionary developments impose on us the military and revolutionary forms of struggle and organization. Hence strikes, agrarian struggles, armed conflicts, general strikes, political strikes—all heading towards insurrection—such are the forms of struggle that flow from the situation. Corresponding to that are also the forms of organization which are revolutionary peasants committees (Telengana), or strike committees, illegal factory committees, or peasant committees—to conduct the struggle, or squads, guerilla or volunteer squads to defend the workers and peasants, which develop into an instrument of attack also.[13]

Such was the understanding of the Communists in India in the first years of independence. This broad overview of Indian reality, which was shared by an overwhelming majority in the party, had taken definite shape a few months after independence but was approved only at the second congress of the party held in Calcutta in February–March 1948, with B. T. Ranadive as the general secretary. Since then it has been known as the Ranadive line. We will see how this line could not provide a stable basis of politics for the Communist movement and how inner-party differences worked to throw out one line after another within a short span of three years. It is also interesting to note that the unity that the Communist movement achieved at the time of independence on this broad platform for political struggle represented a sharp break with the year preceding independence.

As late as April 1946, the Central Committee (CC) of the party, with P. C. Joshi as the general secretary, had in its resolution on the political developments noted that

> ...inside the party some comrades loosely begin to talk about Congress ministries being fascist or semi-fascist. The proper characterization of the Congress and League ministries is that they are popular ministries... because the organizations they represent are the biggest popular organizations of

[13] *Strategy and Tactics in the Struggle for People's Democratic Revolution in India* (Adopted by Politburo of CPI, December 1948), pp. 257–8.

our country, embodying in howsoever a distorted and wrong way, the freedom urge of the vast majority of our people. In addition the Congress is committed to a broad democratic programme of national reconstruction, however reformist it may be.[14]

Thus

Our tactical line is based on the approach that the political differences between us, the Congress and the League should not come in the way of cooperation between all—in people's common interest, which we are all pledged to safeguard and implement....[15]

The assessment made in the second congress characterized this understanding as 'right reformist deviation' and the tactical lines as 'trailing behind the bourgeoisie'.

Accordingly, the most objectionable feature—the root cause of all deviations—was the view of the then Central Committee that the bourgeoisie in India was in opposition to imperialism and therefore interested in genuine independence. In December 1947, the CC of the CPI met and reviewed the situation. It adopted a statement of policy and a document setting out the policy of revolutionary defence against the collaborationist policy of the bourgeois leaders. It specifically rejected the notion of the oppositional role of the bourgeoisie and clearly spelt out for the first time that the bourgeoisie leads a government of collaboration and surrender. This meeting also completely equated the leadership of the national movement with the bourgeoisie by declaring unequivocally that the Congress high command 'had gone over to the camp of imperialism'.[16] The CC meeting was crucial in laying down the ground rules of communist politics for the next few years.

[14] From, *Report on Reformist Deviation* (presented to the second congress of CPI), p. 148.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid. Actually, the beginning of the shift away from 'right-reformism' was the August 1946 CC Resolution. It saw for the first time the 'existence of the revolutionary upsurge' and gave a call to the cadre to lead the 'great strike battles' and be at the centre of peasant struggles all over. I hesitate to treat it as the turning point because even while recognizing the compromising policies of the Congress and League leaders, this resolution had a clearly discernible tilt towards the oppositional role of the national bourgeois leadership.

Assessment of the Bourgeoisie

From now on, right through to the split in the CPI and the formation of the CPI(M) in 1964 and beyond to the formation of CPI(ML) parties from the late 1960s, the assessment of the bourgeoisie was going to be one of the focal points of the inner party debates and of protracted polemics during the periods leading to the splits. The characterization of the state in India, of the nature of government leadership, the assessment of various other political formations, and the like were to hinge on how the bourgeoisie was assessed. Whether it was oppositional or collaborationist, or whether it played a dual role vis-à-vis imperialism, were to be crucial questions in communist politics. The position was something like this: if you overestimate the oppositional capacity of the bourgeoisie, you end up over-assessing its democratic potential and become a victim of 'right reformist deviation'. On the other hand, if you overplay the collaborationist role of the bourgeoisie, then it leads to 'left-sectarian' errors and may lead you to liquidationist adventurism.

By 1948, the tendency arguing that the bourgeoisie was oppositional was totally defeated, and those who remained wedded to it were expelled from the party. The inner party debate now took a curious turn after the second congress. Serious differences arose between the politburo (PB) and the Andhra State Committee which was leading the Telengana partisan war. The general secretary, B. T. Ranadive, took the position that the political thesis of the second congress committed the party to a revolutionary insurrection on the lines of the Russian revolution. The Andhra Committee argued that Telengana had suggested that the Chinese path was more in tune with Indian conditions. The outcomes of this tussle in the party are important only because they illuminate a facet of the Communist party's history in India which is, for some reason, not too well known.

In the beginning, the line advocated by the PB prevailed and preparation were made to launch a railway strike on 9 May 1949, which was to be the beginning of a country-wide working class insurrection. This ended in a fiasco. The workers refused to come out; the cadres were jailed. The leadership hit back by purging the middle ranks for not working seriously to make a success of the strike. There was great unease and consternation in the party.

At this time, an editorial appeared in *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*, the official organ of the Communist Information Bureau, advocating a change in line. This eventually led to the exit of B. T. Ranadive and the assumption of leadership by C. Rajeshwar Rao as the general secretary of the party in June 1950.

What followed was an incredible counter-interpretative exercise on the basis of the same understanding of the Indian state and the class forces. Cutting short the details, two points merit attention. The line now adopted unequivocally stated that

> The present stage of revolution essentially though not exactly is similar to that of the present stage of Chinese revolution, the stage that opened since 1927 bourgeois offensive against communist and working class.[17]

It adds immediately afterwards,

> The offensive launched by the Nehru government against CPI...is practically nothing but a cruel civil war let loose by the imperialist-bourgeois-feudal combine against the working class, peasants and other toiling masses.[18]

The only option for the party was felt to be one where

> ...even day to day partial struggle have to be fought armed or semi armed.[19]

and

> ...the time has come to think in terms of guerilla warfare (Chinese way) against the military onslaught of the Nehru government, which is bent on mercilessly liquidating us.[20]

If the earlier PB was talking of working towards the creation of 'insurrection', the present one saw a 'civil war' already.[21] It attacked the earlier understanding as 'adventurism' partly because it had relied on frontal attack. In the state of the civil war in progress then, guerilla action was taken to be the right revolutionary line. The earlier adventurism was, according to the new leadership, the result not of *overestimation* but *underestimation* of the ability of the

[17] *Report on Left Deviation Inside the CPI* (approved by the CC in June 1950), p. 753.
[18] Ibid., p. 754.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

people to sustain a prolonged armed struggle against the Nehru government.

The line came as a bolt from the blue for most of the party activists outside Andhra and completely paralysed the party. This phase of party history is not too well known because the PB and the CC could not take the line down to the cadres or even the middle ranks. There was great confusion within the party. The party headquarters were now to be the centres of dissent.

The line was soon challenged by three leading members of the party—Ajay Ghosh, S. V. Ghate and S. A. Dange. The document[22] prepared by them accepted, (a) the overall characterization of the transfer of power, (b) the character of the state as colonial, and (c) the leadership under Nehru as collaborationist, and so on. It however debunked the ideas of the Chinese path (guerilla action, liberation zones and armies) or the Russian path (general uprising, insurrection and the armed struggle in general); it reposed greater faith in working class action and all forms of partial struggles to prepare the people for revolutionary action. Furthermore, it felt that the illusions of the people about the Nehru government were deep-rooted and that the party, both organizationally and in the spread of its influence, was very weak.

The document was widely circulated in the party and, talking to party functionaries, one gets the impression that it was well received. It however created a deadlock. No one knew for certain the way in which they should move. It was therefore decided to seek 'fraternal' international advice.[23] A delegation of four, two

[22] *A Note on the Present Situation in Our Party* (known when it was submitted as 'Three Ps' Document', the three Ps being Ajay Ghosh (Prabodh Chandra), S. A. Dange (Prabhakar) and S. V. Ghate (Purushottam) (submitted on 30 Sept. 1950 under pseudonyms).

[23] Works like M. R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India: A Short History* (New York: 1954); John H. Kautsky, *Moscow and the Communist Party of India* (New York: 1956); David N. Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism, 1917–47* (New York: 1959); G. D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, *Communism in India* (California: 1959); Peter Sagar, *Moscow's Hand in India* (Bombay: 1967), and Victor M. Fic, *Peaceful Transition to Communism in India* (Bombay: 1969) have shown a compelling urge to prove that the CPI had always been dictated to and controlled from Moscow. Having studied the documents and other exchanges between CPI and CPSU, and after having talked to many a senior leaders of the Communist movement in India, I believe

from those who had prepared this dissenting document (Ajay Ghosh and S. A. Dange) and two from the PB (Rajeshwar Rao and M. Basavapunniah), went to Moscow and stayed there for four months.

The 'Indian' Revolutionary Path

The result of this visit was that the CPI got, for the first time in its thirty-year history, a (Draft) Programme and a perspective on tactics known as the 1951 Tactical Line. The Programme was accepted at a specially convened party conference in Calcutta in October 1951 together with a Statement of Policy which was a legal version of the Tactical Line. The Programme was further approved by the third party congress in Madurai in December–January 1953–4 with one amendment of para 29.

An immediate result was the withdrawal of the Telengana armed struggle on 13 October 1951. The party prepared itself for the forthcoming first general elections for parliament. It rejected both the Chinese and Russian paths as inappropriate for Indian conditions. It shunned all talk of armed struggle in the then existing conditions but talked of a specifically Indian revolutionary path. What is, however, also important is that it accepted the basic premises about the Indian state and the leadership of the government, but there was a mellowing in the tone of the formulations advanced. Compare this formulation from the Programme with those cited earlier.

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that these works are tendentious. If one gets to their argument—couched in the language of the cold war—and looks at the evidence they adduce, one finds that they have been labouring to prove what needs no proving. None of the Communist parties have ever made a secret of their fraternal relations of collaboration and advice. Some of this exchange has been open, but much of it was, for tactical reasons, never publicly acknowledged.

What can be critically looked at is why this exchange and advice become one-sided; so much so that it often undermined independent thinking and concrete analysis; and how it led to acceptance of facile or irrelevant conclusions. This is however a question of a different genre altogether, which many Communists themselves are pondering over. From the perspective of a Communist, see E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Reminiscences of an Indian Communist* (New Delhi: 1987).

The people of India are gradually realizing the meaning of this state of affairs and are coming to realize the necessity to change this government of landlords and princes, this government of financial sharks and speculators, this government hanging on to the will of the British commonwealth, the British imperialists. The disillusioned masses are slowly rising in struggle, no longer able to withstand this slow starvation and death. They are rising in struggles of the working classes in towns and the resistance of peasantry in the countryside.[24]

India still remained 'the last biggest dependent semi-colonial country in Asia still left for the enslavers to rob and exploit'.[25] Still, as I see it, the programme pointed to some important steps forward. First, the pet mistake of the party of confusing every discontent, every democratic urge of the people with revolutionary upsurge was finally overcome. This had long-term beneficial consequences from the point of view of tactics. Second, while still referring to India as semi-colonial, there was an important change in moving from the dogma that the people wanted the *immediate overthrow* of the government to the more modest assertion that they wanted *change* or *replacement*. Before the Programme, the call was for a final assault; now the party prepared itself to nibble away at the state on a long-term basis.

To have the Programme for the first time was in itself important. The 1951 Party Programme is, however, an instance of the working of contra-factual imagination. Looked at from the perspective of how communists come to certain generalized conclusions, this document suffers from, it appears to me, three major infirmities. First and foremost, it is important to integrate global contradictions with the contradictions within any society; the logical relations have to be one of correspondence and harmony between the two sets of contradictions. Now, if after the victory over fascism, socialism was becoming stronger, new socialist states were emerging, colonialism breaking down, and imperialism retreating, national liberation movements in China, Vietnam and Korea on the threshold of victory, and so on, then in this context, Indian independence could not be treated as an isolated instance. If it was part of a global sea-change, the question to be asked was: how is the Indian state in the same *stage* after independence as it

[24] *The Programme of the CPI, 1951*, para 10.
[25] Ibid., p. 18.

was prior to it? What was the implication of calling it a 'satellite state' and its rulers as 'stooges'? This therefore is the second shortcoming of the programme because it is supposed to also determine the *stage of development in society* from which follow the strategy and tactics of revolution. Furthermore, Indian capitalism was not only growing but showing all the signs of using state power to fill in the economic space opened by the British withdrawal as revealed, among others, in the Bombay Plan (1946) which had the blessings of Indian monopoly capital. Thirdly, a Communist party programme imposes a prerequisite of stating the relations of production and other social relations, the way they are situated in the global context, and how they facilitate or fetter the development of society. There is an embarrassing silence on this. All these, as we will see later, soon divided the party internally and led to interminable debate till it was split in 1964; indeed, by the time of the sixth party congress in 1961, the party was de facto divided.

Newly Independent State and Popular Agitations

Let us briefly pause here and see how the newly independent state in India was taking shape in the face of the initial upheavals. In the face of the communal carnage and the problems of integrating princely states like Hyderabad or Junagarh, or even in the case of Kashmir and the war with Pakistan, it had no choice but to rely on the coercive apparatus. As far as the popular upheavals were concerned, whether in Bengal or Travancore–Cochin or Hyderabad or with workers and employees and others, it had, at least theoretically, two choices. It could use the popular upsurge to begin to change state institutions in a popular direction. Alternatively, it could rely on the inherited colonial coercive institutions to subdue popular movements. Given the alignment of forces within the Congress party, the first option would have meant some instability in political arrangements. These could, however, have had beneficial consequences in the long term, grounding the state on a more responsive basis. The choices made then to rely entirely on the inherited bureaucracy, the police and the armed forces to contain and beat back the popular agitations was to have long-term consequences. It allowed these structures of power—so constructed as to insulate them from popular pressure or accountability—to acquire a certain degree of permanence by making the state

dependent on them. It had one immediate repercussion for power in India. The state in India could not become the inheritor of the values and aspirations of the national movement. One of the purposes of the national movement was to question, on a sustained basis, the logic of the colonial state. What, on the contrary, happened was that the nationalist leadership simply stepped into everything left by the colonial power; most of it is still intact.

We thus have with us today the state institutions whose character has continued to be essentially of a derivative nature. The transformative impulses carried within the national movement and the schemes for the emancipation or empowerment of the underprivileged were to become dependent on these derivative state institutions. This situation held within it one of the underlying contradictions in the political economy of planned social change in India. Thus, radical ideological postures and timidity in translating them into policy packages, or reasonable policy decisions and legislation getting subverted in the process of implementation, can be explained by this contradiction. After all, these derivative institutions are the means through which reactionary forces and vested interests work their way to sabotage schemes of radical charge. In turn, these institutions are also the instruments that enhance the political clout of such forces. It is simplistic to say that these forces can subvert the laws only because they have the political clout. It is in actuality a reciprocal relation that reinforces the power of the privileged, and the Indian bureaucracy is one such network. We must also look at another implication of this contradiction in a situation where the state becomes the only mechanism for the possible realization of transformative social projects.

Soon after the assumption of state power, the Congress set about assimilating the society, in its entirety, into the state.[26] The liberal notion of the autonomy of civil society was at no point explicitly rejected, nor is there evidence that it was seriously questioned systematically. However, the way the strategies of economic transformation for the well-being of the people, the social emancipation of the oppressed, and giving entitlements to the underprivileged were conceived, the autonomy of society and its varied

[26] I owe a debt to Partha Chatterjee for first providing me with an insight into this question. The way I am using this or the implications I intend to draw are not quite the same as in his work, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*? (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986).

impulses—democratic and egalitarian—could express themselves primarily through the voice of the state and, secondarily, through channels and under conditions approved by the state.[27] If we look at the women question, the tribals, the oppressed nationalities, the untouchables, all of whom remain to this day marginal to the 'national mainstream' the voice of the state is supposed to be the sole representative authentic voice. The state knows best what these strata and groups need, better even than the concerned groups themselves.

In actual practice, this constituted a denial of the autonomy of society. Any spontaneous expression of aspirations or discontent in the form of agitations, even when without militant overtones but challenging the legitimizing claims of the state, became suspect in the eyes of the government. When such agitations or movements were conceived and led by the radical opposition, they were often treated as anti-national. A curious term, 'politically motivated', was inserted into the political vocabulary in India to condemn such popular movements. This did incalculable harm to the responsiveness of the state.

This way of handling popular movements made people withdraw, whenever defeated or pushed back by the naked display of the might of the state, into their worlds of inherited beliefs and culture. When conditions of life become particularly difficult and people get exasperated, this refuge provides the ground for the sustenance and also articulation of popular discontent. Over time,

[27] Let me reproduce a few typical instances of Nehru's thinking on the state. In his *Autobiography* in 1935 he wrote:

> State violence is preferable to private violences in many ways, for one major violence is far better than numerous petty private violences. State violence is also likely to be more or less ordered violence and thus preferable to disorderly violence of private groups and individuals for even in violence order is better than disorder (p. 552).

Long after India became free, Nehru as Prime Minister said:

> parliamentary democracy is inevitably going in the direction everywhere of what might be called economic democracy. It may take different forms but only in the measure that it solves the economic problems does it succeed even in the political field [*Speeches 11* (25 February 1956), p. 142].

And added

> ...where there is adult suffrage there the question of trying to change things by violence is absurd and wholly wrong [ibid., p. 287].

this process erodes the possibilities of sustained secular politics; the Indian state as the vanguard of secular positions retreated, leaving the political terrain to obscurantist forces. It is a matter of some importance, that has somehow not been clearly identified so far, that the more wanton forms of communal vandalism in the recent phase coincide with the withdrawal of ordinary people into their respective communities.

The independent Indian state was from the very outset suspicious of popular agitations and radical movements. Even Gandhi's suggestions and criticisms at around the time of the transfer of power were seen to hold damaging consequence for the stabilization of the power of the new state. Gandhian protests were, in my view, the defiant voice of society refusing to be assimilated by the state. I say this notwithstanding all of my reservations about the ideological claims of Gandhism.

If this is how the state was to view the voice of protest from the 'father of the nation',[28] one can well imagine how it would be disposed towards radical popular movements, especially militant peasant and working class protests. Large sections of the masses were astir, demanding an end to autocratic and feudal practices and for new entitlements to land and other resources. All this was in tune with Congress proclamations when articulating anti-imperialist and anti-feudal concerns during the freedom struggle, but it now looked at everything in terms of stable political life for the 'nation' and saw that stability in terms of the legitimacy of the state. The state chose to repress, if need be with armed force, the more radical and militant movements and to push back and contain the inconvenient ones, whether for linguistic states or for land reform.[29] Following the abolition of *zamindari* and other large landed estates, the other land reform programmes were left half

[28] A little before his death Gandhi said:
Whatever the Congress decides will be done; nothing will be according to what I say. My writ runs no more. If it did, the tragedies in Punjab, Bihar and Noakhali would not have happened. No one listens to me any more. I am a small man. True, there was a time when mine was a big voice. Then everybody obeyed what I said; now neither the Congress nor the Hindus nor the Muslims listen to me. Where is the Congress going today? It is disintegrating. I am crying in the wilderness. (*Collected Works*, vol. 87, p. 187, quoted in Partha Chatterjee, op. cit.)

[29] See first quote in Note 27.

implemented. All other sections of peasantry below the substantial owners were silently bypassed.[30]

State–Society Relationship

I have already shown in some detail what set the tone of communist politics immediately after independence. The background of upheavals and a naïve overestimation of their revolutionary potential led it to evolve grossly inappropriate strategic concepts. On the other hand, the conceptual assimilation of society by the state was to have long-term ramifications even for communist politics in India. The state sought to define the world of the people; society simply became a recipient of the enlightened ideas of those who controlled the state. The communist movement in India failed, I believe, to grasp the conceptual moves being made by the state leadership represented by Nehru to assimilate society into the ambit of the state.

Many of the failings of radical politics now become clear. Why, for example, were questions of culture, of educational movements among the masses, or social reforms directed towards the existing popular consciousness, or questions concerning the position of women, relegated as matters of secondary importance for the left movement? We can alternatively ask how the relation between economic struggles and the day-to-day life of the people was conceived? Do all the concepts by which people organize their experiences and through which they receive and respond to political messages lie within the intersection of politics and economics?

Sympathetic critics of the communist movement have often felt that the CPI was insensitive to demands raised by Dalits, women, etc. I think otherwise. I believe that the answer lies in the CPI's failure to grasp the strategy of the more radical sections of the political leadership of the ruling classes, articulated principally by its left-wing led by Nehru. The Communist Party posed the question as a choice between polar opposites: are you for or against the overthrow of the state? The movements led by the ruling classes took intermediate positions which were considered

[30] Nehru said: '...we have land legislation in a way so as not to throw the landlords to the wolves. That is we try to fit them into our future structure'. [*Speeches III* (December 1954), p. 13.]

reformist by the Communists. The reverse of this failure was to formulate the entire revolutionary strategy and the tactical lines with reference only to the state.

Involved here is the very conceptulization of the state–society relationship, which in turn subsumes a number of assumptions about what power and structure and agency can reciprocally do to one another. Concretely, the real issue here is not that the CPI did not develop its own charter of demands or evolve tasks for the cadres as critiques of the understanding by the state. The point is, rather, that the way it did this was merely an inversion of what the state was doing. The struggles, agitations and propaganda conducted around these demands by the CPI or its mass-class organizations were decidedly important in raising the general awareness as well as in building pressure upon the state to initiate change. But it did it methodologically, in the same way that the state leadership was doing it; that is, by deducing demands from the state's perspective. Nevertheless, people still remained recipients of what flowed out of their agitational politics. The CPI could mobilize masses belonging to the exploited classes and strata and was good at giving them confidence when they followed it on its terms. It could not, however, enter into their world as it was, or on their terms, and to engage them in a constant dialogue that could have been instrumental in bringing about attitudinal changes and altering value orientations. These could have, one may conjecture, created a ground on which to build an alternative hegemony through slow alterations in the consciousness of the masses.

The centrepiece of the politics of the Communist parties, pursued since Independence to this day, has been, whatever the major changes and variations in the strategy and tactics, to accept the state as the main reference for the counter-mobilization of people. Depending on particular assessments, it could be taking the state head on or undermining it. Translated in class terms, it meant all those forces that controlled the state and those who could be mobilized to fight for the alternative class coalition for a people's democratic state. Which these class forces precisely were is a question to which answers have not been infrequently changing.

Equally damaging for the long-term interest of left politics was the tendency in the party to make periodic assessments of the nature of the Indian state simply based on the changing policies of the government and, on certain occasions, on the reflections and

thoughts expressed by Nehru. In accordance with such periodic assessments, there were corresponding adjustments in the party line. There also were adjustments in the inclusion or exclusion of classes and social groups as potential allies in the united front.

By the time the party met for its third party congress in Madurai (27 December 1953 to 4 January 1954), a vocal pro-Congress line had emerged within the leadership. Its first expression was in the growing appreciation of Nehru's foreign policy. To begin with, it was argued that there were 'progressive' features in the government's foreign policy but the internal policies continued to be 'reactionary'. Responding to persistent questioning on this bifurcation of foreign policy as progressive and domestic policy as reactionary, the party in an explanatory note made the following observation:

> The foreign policy is to strengthen the position of ruling classes in India vis-à-vis the ruling classes of capitalist states and against the socialist state...and the internal policy is a matter of regulating relations between various classes in society and to strengthen the position of ruling classes against certain social forces.[31]

The party thus sought to disprove that there was any contradiction in its stand, but some continued to argue that foreign policy could not be detached from the overall outlook of the ruling classes and that this was bound to be reflected in the internal policies of the government.

Starting with India's changing stand on the Korean war and opposition to the MacArthur plans, and Nehru's stand on questions of war and peace and nuclear weapons, a change could be seen in the Communist party's attitude to the Nehru government. This was strengthened after Khrushchev's visit, soon followed by that of Zhou-en-Lai.[32] The humiliating defeat of the CPI in the Andhra elections of 1955 also contributed to the process. The Congress distributed pamphlets of Khrushchev's speeches in the campaign whereas the CPI kept denouncing Nehru and his government as agents of imperialism and the collaborating bourgeoisie. The leadership in the party at various levels began questioning this

[31] E. M. S. Namboodiripad, 'The Character and Politics of the Nehru Government', *New Age* (August 1955). All references are from this political monthly.

[32] The most important source for these debates and the theoretical issues involved in them was the *New Age*.

pronounced divergence between the party's stand and that of the biggest socialist state.

Khrushchev not only praised Nehru as a state leader but also as a bearer of national development and remarked that his government was a sapling that needed to be tended. Given all this, the CC of the party met in June 1955 and, reviewing the Andhra election results, noted, first, the failure of the party to place before the people the important part played by India in favour of world peace and Asian solidarity and, secondly, that this failure had been utilized by the Congress to claim the entire credit.[33]

Pro-Congress Trend

Around this time an article by Modeste Rubinstein[34] on the possibilities of a non-capitalist path of development and Nehru's example became a source of polemical exchanges in the party.

As this pro-Congress trend became more and more vocal, the party, while noting some 'good features' in the development of the economy, especially the frame for the Second Five-Year Plan, rejected 'all speculations' about support to the Congress government. It noted that emphasis on heavy industry, the state sector, relations of economic cooperation between India and the USSR, steps to impose ceilings on landholdings, etc. had opened vast possibilities of economic development but these did not lead to a new path which would take society towards socialism; they were welcome only to the extent that they would strengthen national independence. The chief weakness remained in the way resources were to be raised at the cost of the people and utilized to strengthen the ruling classes.[35]

The pro-Congress trend was not however silenced; rather, it became more persistent, and cited the 'good features' as decisive. At this, the party, after long debates in the CC, set out the only permissible ground for collaborating with the Congress government. It went, to paraphrase in terms of criteria, something like this: (1) Only if a powerful reactionary party opposing the

[33] 'Editorial Comment', *New Age* (June 1955).

[34] 'A Non-Capitalist Path for Underdeveloped Countries' reproduced in *New Age*, (October 1958) as an App. Ajay Ghosh, general secretary of CPI, wrote a rejoinder: 'On India's Path of Development' in the same issue, pp. 4–12.

[35] Ajoy Ghosh, 'Problems of Industrialisation', *New Age* (January 1956).

government had an opportunity of coming to power, then some sort of general agreement with the Congress would become necessary; (2) as there was no such possibility now, to do so would be a betrayal of the people and would sow confusion and disarm the people.[36] As time went by and the debate over the approaching second general elections (to be held in early 1957) built up in the party, it was reiterated that there was 'no possibility of a reactionary government replacing Congress' and that therefore there was no necessity to modify the party's 'opposition to Congress'. Significantly, it went on to add that a big victory for the Congress would be a 'victory of reaction'; the coming elections were therefore to be treated as a struggle against the Congress.[37]

It is by now evident that the CC of the CPI and the party activists were deeply divided and there was no unified understanding in the party about the stage of the revolution or on perspective, strategy and tactics. The general-secretary of the party (with the help of this or that section in the PB) was performing, it seems to me, a constant balancing act to hold the party together. By the time the party met for its fourth congress at Palghat (19–29 April 1956), the divisions had become open and visible, and a split was feared. The pro-Congress or pro-government trend had by now become a majority trend in the CC and the PB. The Draft Political Resolution to be presented at the party congress talked of the need to cooperate with the Congress party. It argued that world capitalism was entering its third general crisis; that everybody in the world was now talking of socialism and that political correlations were changing in its favour. It was possible now to build socialism with the help of the socialist camp and Soviet aid, and that the Indian state had made great progress, and so on. A counter-document, as an alternative Draft Political Resolution, was also presented to the CC by the trend opposed to cooperation with the Congress. This counter-draft was rejected in the CC by an overwhelming majority, but when it was presented to the party congress it was accepted by the delegates to the great embarrassment of the CC. This counter-document can be viewed as the first

[36] Ajoy Ghosh, 'Some Questions of Theory', *New Age*, May 1956 and in 'Editorial Comment', *New Age* (July 1956).

[37] Ajoy Ghosh, 'The Communist Party and the General Elections', *New Age* (September 1956).

ideological statement in the eventual formation of the CPI(M). After the party congress, a large number of CC members rejected the document approved by the party congress and denounced the positions contained in it and produced a counter-proposal more pro-Congress in its tone than the original Draft Political Resolution. This counter-proposal, if my reading is correct, became the basis of the CPI position after the split. Somehow the split in the party, at that time, was averted through a compromise proposal by the party general secretary, Ajoy Ghosh. It was no doubt a makeshift compromise lacking in clarity and full of logical inconsistencies; the concepts it adopted, like those of People's Democracy, were not in tune with the reasoning adopted, nor was the characterization of the Indian state as one of bourgeois landlords properly spelt out: it completely failed to identify the position in state power of the monopoly section of the bourgeoisie.

Three important changes need to be noted and a question asked about the method involved in arriving at them. First, by 1955 the entire party agreed that the 1951 Programme of the CPI needed to be kept in abeyance because many ideas were incorrect. There was also unanimous agreement that it should be revised, but how to go about this became contentious and differences were never resolved until the split in 1964. For example, in June 1955, the CC of the CPI met and in the resolution published immediately afterwards, gave up some of the major formulations in the 1951 Party Programme. The characterization that 'this government hanging on to the will of British commonwealth…' (para 10) and similar other statements were viewed as wrong or the assessment that the Government of India 'essentially carries out the foreign policy of British imperialism' (para 12) was held as no longer being true; or the view that economic reconstruction was 'all floundering, except such as feed war purposes' (para 7) was not found to be correct.[38] Still, the debate over the Party Programme continued. Further changes were made at the Party Congress in Palghat where it was stated that the programme 'missed some essential factors in the new situation'. These were the contradictions between the national bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and imperialism, on the other; the role that the mass urge to consolidate and strengthen

[38] This was summed up by Ajoy Ghosh in 'New Situation and Our Tasks', *New Age* (May 1961; July 1955).

national freedom and the national economy could play; and above all, the vast and decisive significance of the emergence of socialism as a world system. India was thus no longer a 'satellite' state and the bourgeoisie that led it played a dual role as it sought relations with socialist countries.[39] Secondly, by 1956 the party was debating the possibility of peaceful transitions to socialism. It noted that 'the possibility exists of effecting the transition to socialism peacefully without resort to civil war'.[40] By the time of the fifth party congress at Amritsar (6–13 April 1958), the new Draft Constitution proposed that

> The CPI strives to achieve full democracy and socialism by peaceful means. It considers that by developing a powerful mass movement, by winning a majority in the parliament and by backing it with mass sanctions, the working class and its allies can overcome the resistance of forces of reaction and ensure that parliament becomes an instrument of people's will for effecting fundamental changes in economic, social and state structure.[41]

Thirdly, the Indian bourgeoisie was no longer being considered collaborationist. Rather, it had a dual character.[42] The bourgeoisie had serious contradictions with imperialism because it wanted independent industrialization of India and therefore fought imperialism, but it was too weak and wanted imperialist help, aid and financial assistance, and therefore also collaborated with it. What however remained a matter of dispute were the reasons behind this dual character. Was it the entire bourgeoisie? Or was there a split in its ranks, one section having gone over to imperialism and the other standing in opposition to it? This was never resolved until 1964 and was one of the crucial issues in the party split.

The question that needs to be asked is: was it Nehru who had changed so much between 1951 and 1955 or had the change in the

[39] Ibid. (May 1961) and *Political Resolution* (Draft) fourth party congress, Palghat, 19–29 April 1956.

[40] Ajoy Ghosh, 'Twentieth Congress of the CPSU', *New Age* (April 1956); see also his 'Some Questions of Theory', *New Age* (May 1956).

[41] Ajoy Ghosh, 'On The Party Constitution', *New Age* (February 1958).

[42] Ajoy Ghosh, 'Indian Bourgeoisie', in *New Age* (December 1955). My readings suggest that, to understand the complexity of the question of characterizing the bourgeoisie, this is the single most important contribution. It is also important in understanding the position adopted by the CPI(M) and CPI about the Indian bourgeoisie after the split in 1964.

international communist movement in its views on India allowed Nehru the margin for manoeuvre that he was looking for?

The period ended without the CPI settling down to a stable basis for conducting its politics. Communist politics in India continued in a state of confusion and divisiveness until 1964. In spite of this, the CPI came to power in Kerala, the first time a Communist party had been able to do so in a multi-party competitive system anywhere in the world. Kerala also became important in another way. To topple the Kerala government, the Indian state mobilized a combination of the worst communal and casteist forces, and used them in an unprecedented way to manipulate the secular institutions of Indian politics. Indian politics could never be the same again.

The licence for this kind of politics was first given by the most distinguished secularist that India has seen; Nehru declared the casteist–communal line up for the dismissal of the elected Communist government in Kerala as a 'popular upsurge'. This legitimized caste–communal mobilization under a secular leadership—open caste–communal mobilization not just to disrupt radical politics but simply to weaken political opposition has shown a steady rise since then.

Consequences of 'Non-Hegemonic Conquest'

For a critical understanding of the positions of the CPI, its successes and failure, it is important to get around the question of the state as the prime focus of revolutionary activity in society and direct it against existing power structures.

The position of the bourgeoisie and its characterization, as I have sought to show, has been, and still remains, the fad of the communist movement in India. The programmatic differences between the CPI, the CPI(M) and the various CPI(ML) factions, also known as the Naxalites, continue to centre around the character of the bourgeoisie. The CPI differentiates between monopoly (big) bourgeoisie which seeks collaboration with imperialism and the national (non-big) bourgeoisie which opposes imperialism. The CPI(M), while conceding internal differentiations within the bourgeoisie, rejects the notion of a split and instead treats the whole of it as national in character but also insists that the entire bourgeoisie both collaborates with and opposes imperialism. The

CPI(ML) groups look at the bourgeoisie as no more than collaborators, that is, comprador, none of whom can be relied upon to defend India's independence.[43]

Far more important than this, it seems to me, is the question of the terrain that the Indian state has been conquering for itself; a question that the communist movement has failed to address. In terms of the conceptual assimilation of society by the state, the USSR before Gorbachev would represent the logical culmination of this process. Its antithesis is the classical liberal state in England. India would lie somewhere in between, given all the fluctuations it has undergone. One result for this failure to question the advance of the state is an inability to develop alternative forms of democracy. These could have become, one can conjecture, the basis of a forward movement towards emancipatory mobilization and the development of viable models to take society to higher forms of democracy. It remains an intriguing fact that though communists have written so voluminously on the state, they have yet to produce a comprehensive analysis of the social formation, and of the complexities of the national question in India as a whole; individual communists like Namboodiripad or Sundarayya have done so only for specific regions.

I think that what made it difficult for the Communist party to analyse the conceptual moves being made by the Congress in the Nehru period was its uncritical acceptance of the Stalinist model of the Soviet socialist state as the only valid model for socialist practice. The state controlled by the revolutionary classes organized under the Communist party became the sole legitimate voice of everything in society. The construction of the revolutionary state, personifying the future as emancipation, was and remained until recently the historical justification for the rejection of the voice of the unacceptable face of existing society. This, in essence, was simply an inversion of the Hegelian view of the state as the transcendence of the evils of the autonomous 'civil' society, which Marx subjected to savage criticism. If, in the classical liberal view, the state, embodying values that were of a universalizing nature, abstractly overcomes the evils of social life, here in socialist practice those evils were simply silenced on the assumption that the

[43] Mohan Ram, *Indian Communism: Split within a Split* (New Delhi: 1969) refers to this as 'Maoism Returns'.

provision of economic well-being without exploitation would take care of everything in life. In neither case was society radically overcome by a new awareness of human potentialities and practical consciousness.

The disastrous consequences of this can be seen in Eastern Europe, part of the erstwhile USSR. The re-emergence of the social voice in these erstwhile socialist societies shows how little social life as lived had changed in forty years of socialist economic transformation. Indeed, one could argue that there is more that is conservative and reactionary in these countries than anywhere else in the industrialized world. This is a clear instance of what in the beginning of this analysis I termed non-hegemonic conquest.

The hold of this model on the thinking of Communist parties and on the communist mind in general did not allow them to see the manoeuvres of the Indian state to subsume society within itself. Nor did it allow them to intervene in the day-to-day life of the people as lived in the inherited institutions and thus to transform their outlook and develop alternative institutions. This has very wide-ranging consequences on how the politics of the left related itself to radical movements, whether of the peasants or working classes or oppressed groups such as Scheduled castes or tribals or women; but then that is another story which will have to be told in another way.[44]

[44] There are many works on the communist movement in India from different ideological perspectives. But within this large presence, there is a significant absence. There is as yet no official history of the communist movement from the CPI; none by the united party before 1964 or after 1964 by the CPI(M) or the CPI or any of the CPI(ML) factions organized under different CCs. The absence of an official history is largely because an official history needs theorization of both defeats and successes. Take Telangana, for instance, on which there are half a dozen different interpretations from within the communist movement itself. On most other events, there is a similar failure to achieve a unified understanding.

10

Parliamentary Communism as a Historical Phenomenon: The CPI(M) in West Bengal[+]

AMRITA BASU

The Left Front government's dilemmas concerning the use of parliamentary means to achieve radical reform strikingly resemble those of northern European social democracies. Analysing the theoretical debates about parliamentary socialism in Europe thus helps to elucidate the CPI(M)'s approach in West Bengal. How successfully had parliamentary communism achieved radical reform? To what extent do structural conditions determine political parties' strategic choices? Might other strategies have produced more progressive outcomes?[1]

[+] *Two Faces of Protest: Contrasting Modes of Women's Activism in India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

[1] Reference is made in this article to interviews conducted with bureaucrats, CPI(M) party officials, and Left Front government officials in Calcutta between January and March 1985. Unless otherwise specified, all interviews were conducted as part of this project.

Rather than citing each of these interviews separately, I list here the people interviewed in the order they appear in the article, along with the position they held at the time of the interview: Jyoti Basu, chief minister of West Bengal; Manoranjan Rai, president of the Centre for Industrial Trade Unions (CITU); Ashim Dasgupta, member of the West Bengal State Planning Advisory Board (1982–7) and subsequently finance minister (1987–92); Kanai Bhowmick, minister for minor irrigation (1982–7); Benoy Chowdhury, land and reforms minister (1982–7 and 1987–present); P. C. Bannerjee, secretary for land reforms; Nihar Bose, minister for cooperatives (1982–7); Biplab Dasgupta, director of the Comprehensive Area Development Programme (CADP) and subsequently

At the risk of oversimplifying rich theoretical and historical literature, one can discern two major positions concerning the relationship of European social democracies to radical change. One approach emphasizes the progressive dynamic of social democracy. Gosta Esping-Andersen and John Stephens argue that, under certain conditions, the dynamics of electoral competition may impel social democratic governments to widen their policy agenda from political to social to economic democracy.[2] The cumulative character of these changes ultimately collides with the structural limits of capitalism and makes possible socialist transition.

By contrast, a second approach finds that liberal democratic forms exert conservatizing pressures. Adam Przeworski and Claus Offe emphasize the electoral necessity to produce pluralities and thereby downplay class appeals, the tendency for bureaucratic and representative forms to supplant direct participation, and the need for leftist parties to appear politically 'responsible' as well as capable of delivering immediate material benefits.[3] Inevitably, social democratic movements have abandoned radical goals in favour of a reformist approach.

Within this second approach, explanations for the conservatizing consequences of social democracy differ. Unlike Przeworski and Offe, who emphasize structural constraints, Leo Panitch highlights leaders' strategic choices.[4] Panitch argues that social democratic parties need not accept the structure of the state, promulgate class harmony, orient mobilization toward electoral ends, and reinforce

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member of Parliament (1989–91); Ajoy Sinha, special secretary to Jyoti Basu; D. Bandhopadhyaya, secretary for land reforms; Ashok Mitra, finance minister (1982–7); and Jatin Chakraborty, minister for public works (1982–7).

[2] John D. Stephens, *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Politics against Markets* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[3] Adam Przeworski, 'Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon', *New Left Review*, vol. 122, August–September 1980, pp. 27–57; and Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Claus Offe, *Disorganized Capitalism: Contemporary Transformations of Work and Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), and *Contradictions of the Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

[4] Leo Panitch, *Working-Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labour and the State* (London: Verso Books, 1986).

the division between industrial and political organization. Workers have been abandoning social democratic parties because of their moderation, not militancy.

What light does the Left Front governments's experience shed on this debate? To what extent has the CPI(M)'s reform agenda progressively broadened, as in the dynamic described by Esping-Andersen, or diminished, as Panitch and Przeworski suggest? To the extent that the CPI(M) has been deradicalized, does the explanation lie more in structural constraints or strategic choices? How might a radical strategy differ from the CPI(M)'s approach?

If the comparison between West Bengal and Western Europe seems surprising, the CPI(M)'s trajectory has much in common with that of Eurocommunist and social democratic parties. Indeed, there is a certain ethnocentrism in assuming that the Left Front government's experience should be assessed exclusively in the light of debates about 'peasant societies'. Certain structural constraints—such as the imperatives of capitalist development and electoral competition—are the same in West Bengal and in European social democracies. The organization, ideologies, and strategies of social democratic and communist parties are also quite similar. Although the reforms in each context differ in substance, they are formulated through a similar process: by the state, in incremental fashion, on the basis of multi-class coalitions that include elements of capital.

The factors that complicate a comparison between West Bengal and Western Europe are double-edged. On the one hand, a sub-national government clearly has more limited autonomy than the nation-states. On the other hand, while the Indian state governments possess considerable latitude, the small northern European states are far from autonomous *vis-à-vis* the international economic and political system. Furthermore, West Bengal's revolutionary tradition, coupled with its underdeveloped political economy, exerts greater pressures toward radical reform than exist in Western Europe. Far from the differences between West Bengal and Western Europe constituting a liability for comparative purposes, they make the similarities in the policy outcomes of social democratic rules particularly striking.

But clearly the first step is to explore the extent to which the conditions that these approaches specify exist in West Bengal. For example, can progressive radicalization of social democratic regimes occur in the absence of economic expansion, transformation

of the class structure, and government control over the business cycle, which Esping-Andersen stipulates are necessary? Could the CPI(M) pursue a radical strategy in the absence of a large, cohesive industrial working class, which Panitch considers essential to capitalist transformation?

Dilemmas Confronting the CPI(M)

There are close parallels in the literature on the Left Front government to the debates on European social democracy. In a provocative article, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward', Ashok Rudra argues that the government's major reforms neither challenge the dominant classes nor benefit the oppressed groups. Echoing Przeworski and Offe, Rudra argues, 'If a political party aims at majority support among the agricultural population, it cannot but in the ultimate analysis betray the most exploited and oppressed sections of the rural masses.'[5] In contrast, Atul Kohli suggests that the CPI(M)'s abandonment of revolutionary aspirations has enhanced its ability to represent the poor.[6] Consistent with Esping-Andersen and Stephens, Kohli argues that the CPI(M)'s coherent leadership, populist ideology, and centralized organization have enabled it to penetrate the countryside without being captured by propertied groups.

Rudra and Kohli agree that the Left Front government's political reforms do not redistribute economic power. However, while Rudra believes that this prevents political power from being democratically redistributed, Kohli assumes that the Left Front government could not alter the prevailing class relations and credits it nonetheless for depriving the landlords of political power.

Both analyses oversimplify the relationship between economic constraints and political reforms. On the one hand, Rudra is overly pessimistic about the possibility of far-reaching reform through elected bodies. At the same time, he seems oblivious to structural constraints when he criticizes the CPI(M)'s reformism. Kohli, on the other hand, disregards the manner in which the party organization and leadership have impeded effective reform.

[5] Ashok Rudra, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 15, nos 25–6, 20–7 June 1981, p. A61.

[6] Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 143.

In contrast to Rudra, I do not believe that the only criterion by which to judge the CPI(M) is revolutionary change. Such a position disregards the substantial reforms that the CPI(M) sponsored in its first years in office. However, unlike Kohli, I emphasize the CPI(M)'s failure to achieve even modest reformist gains since 1980. Nor do I believe that Kohli is sufficiently attentive to the CPI(M)'s failure to stretch existing limits. For the CPI(M) to succeed would require combining an effective electoral strategy with creative grassroots organizing. This approach would require audacity and imagination, which the CPI(M) lacks wholly.

The CPI(M)'s reformism is a product both of necessity and choice. Overwhelming economic and political obstacles to radical reform derive from the context of an underdeveloped, class-divided society, the constraints that the Centre imposes on state governments, and the CPI(M)'s relationship with the Left Front coalition partners. However, some sources of the CPI(M)'s deradicalization, such as its pursuit of an electoral strategy, are only partially determined by 'external' necessity; the party leadership, ideology, and organization bear the major responsibility.

Among the major 'external constraints' on the CPI(M) is, first the underdeveloped character of West Bengal's economy. It is as incumbent on communist as on capitalist governments to develop productive forces. Otherwise, socialism is tantamount to the redistribution of poverty—as generations of Marxists have warned. The CPI(M) has adopted the Leninist dual-stage theory of revolution, which postpones the socialist stage until after capitalism is achieved. The familiar price paid is a refusal to challenge capitalist exploitation.[7]

Second, the CPI(M)'s relationship to the national government has subjected it to numerous constraints that have ultimately compromised radical goals. If, as has been frequently noted, communist

[7] On the tendency for the 'two-stage theory' to become associated with reformist goals in the European context, see Carl Boggs, Jr, 'Eurocommunism and the State Crisis of Legitimation', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 23, 1978–9, pp. 35–81, and Sidney Tarrow, *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (New York: Yale University Press, 1976). Ronald Herring analyses the dilemmas that parliamentary communists face in their stance on capitalist development in the Indian context in 'Dilemmas of Agrarian Communism: Peasant Differentiation, Sectoral, and Village Politics', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 1, January 1989, pp. 89–115.

nations find it difficult to sustain their revolutionary character within a global capitalist system, the problem is magnified for subnational communist governments.[8] The CPI(M)'s credibility partly rests upon its ability to delegitimize the central government and demonstrate the viability of a leftist alternative. Yet, the Left Front government's very survival rests precariously upon central government sanction.

Third, the CPI(M) can become a major opposition party at the national and often even at the local level only by forming alliances. Like many other communist parties, it has at times allied with conservative parties to defend democracy against authoritarianism. Indeed, refusal to do so may reflect extreme sectarianism and blindness. (Recall the Communist party in Weimar Germany.) Yet, coalitions have spawned tactical, ideological, and personality conflicts that undermine progressive goals.[9] In the West Bengal context, conflicts among coalition partners were partially responsible for the downfall of the United Front governments in 1967 and 1969.

However, not even these daunting constraints are totally intractable. The CPI(M) has scarcely explored means of capital accumulation that are compatible with a radical land reform strategy, although the Indian federal system provides significant autonomy to state governments, particularly in the agrarian sphere. Moreover,

[8] On the challenges that European communist parties have faced in achieving radical reform at the local level, see Peter Lang, 'The PCI at the Local Level: A Study of Strategic Performance, in D. L. M. Blackmer and S. Tarrow (eds), *Communism in Italy and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Jerome Milch, 'The PCF and Local Government: Continuity and Change', in D. L. M. Blackmer and S. Tarrow (eds), *Communism in Italy and France*, op. cit.; Paolo Ceccareli, 'Local Government Control and European Communist Parties', in Maurice Zeitlin (ed.), *Political Power and Social Theory* , vol. 3 (Greenwich, CT: Jai Press, 1982); Raffaella Nanetti and Robert Leonard, 'Participatory Planning: The PCI's New Approach to Municipal Planning', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 7, no. 1, March 1979, pp. 49–65; and Martin A. Schain, *French Communism and Local Power: Urban Politics and Political Change* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985).

[9] Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Carol McClurg Mueller (eds), *The Women's Movements of the United States and Western Europe* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), explores the dilemmas that women's organizations experience in building coalitions with European communist parties.

the central government seems disinclined to overthrow the Left Front government. Although the CPI(M) is much stronger under the Left Front government than it was under previous United Front government, it was far more audacious in the early 1970s than it is today.

To understand more fully the sources of CPI(M) reformism we must consider the party's ideology, organization, and leadership. Of particular significance are the CPI(M)'s emphasis on electoral success and its adherence to democratic centralist principles. Moreover, the imperatives described earlier—to represent multiclass interests, stimulate capitalist growth, and co-operate with the central government—have all grown as a result of the CPI(M)'s long tenure in office. As Przeworski notes:

> To win the votes of people other than workers, particularly the petty bourgeoisie, to form alliances and coalitions, to administer the government in the interests of workers, a party cannot appear to be 'irresponsible', to give any indication of being less than wholehearted about its commitment to the rules and limits of the parliamentary game.[10]

The following section analyses the sources of the CPI(M)'s deradicalization, and the next section evaluates its performance under the Left Front government. To understand these cumulative tendencies, I analyse the constraints upon the CPI(M)'s actions. The concluding section returns to the questions raised above concerning the prospects of parliamentary communism.

The Sources of CPI(M) Reformism

The CPI(M) became India's leading communist party largely because it consistently adopted a more oppositional stance to the state, the bourgeoisie, and the Congress party than did the Communist Party of India. Yet, it also avoided what it described as the 'revolutionary adventurism' of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) [CPI(M–L)]. The CPI(M) has sought to extend its influence by progressively moderating its stance.

Dissident CPI members formed the CPI(M) on 11 April 1964 because they questioned the CPI's sympathetic depiction of the state, its largely parliamentary approach, and its close relationship

[10] Adam Przeworski, 'Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon', op. cit., pp. 30–1.

with the Soviet Union. Although the CPI allied with the national bourgeoisie, the CPI(M) contended that this constituted an alliance with imperialist forces. The CPI relied primarily on parliamentary methods, whereas the CPI(M) considered them to be tactically useful but unlikely to achieve fundamental change. Although the CPI favoured a close relationship with the Soviet Union, the CPI(M) rejected the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) leadership and sought to pursue an independent path. However, today the CPI(M) has largely abandoned extra-parliamentary mass mobilization and has become preoccupied with the exercise of power. What explains its changed stance?

Given India's durable democratic tradition, it is more difficult for communist parties in India than in most other Third Word countries to reject parliamentary means. The strength and legitimacy of the state, the bourgeoisie, and the ruling Congress party have long confounded the Indian communist movement. Having courted repression and unpopularity by pursuing a purely confrontational strategy, the undivided Communist party decided in the mid-1950s to accept the parliamentary route. The CPI(M) emphasized extra-parliamentary methods in its infancy because it did not aspire to attain office. With electoral success in West Bengal (1967 and 1969–70), a parliamentary strategy became more feasible.

The Naxalite movement further deradicalized the CPI(M). On 2 March 1967, when the first United Front government took office, the CPI(M) dissidents supported a peasant uprising in the Naxalbari region of northern Bengal. The Naxalite movement gave birth to the underground revolutionary party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist). The Left Front government's former finance minister, Ashok Mitra, noted in an interview that the CPI(M–L)'s formation deprived the CPI(M) of its most militant cadres.

The Naxalite movement also exacerbated the contradictions between the CPI(M)'s revolutionary aspirations and its exercise of state power. Suppressing the Naxalbari uprising would have discredited the CPI(M) among radical critics both inside and outside the party. At the same time, if the agitation grew, the Centre could simply dismiss the United Front government. When negotiations failed, the West Bengal cabinet voted unanimously to quell the uprising. In arriving at this decision and in subsequently

justifying it, the CPI(M) affirmed its opposition to radical methods and goals.

Most importantly, the repression that the CPI(M) experienced during its short tenure in office moderated its stance. The CPI(M)-led United Front government that took office in March 1967 planned extensive agrarian reform. Its minister of land and land revenue, Harekrishna Konar, gave priority to vesting and redistributing land that exceeded the legal ceiling and to ensuring sharecroppers' permanent rights to cultivation on a hereditary basis. Because Konar did not believe that land redistribution could be achieved simply through legal or bureaucratic means, he encouraged peasant organizations to seize land and crops from landlords. After the central government dismissed the first United Front government from office, Konar formulated an even more radical approach. He now regarded parliamentary participation as a means to 'wreck the system from within'. According to this strategy, which the CPI(M) National Council adopted in 1968, CPI(M) dominated coalitions would wage a 'relentless class struggle against the centre'.[11]

The second CPI(M)-led United Front government in West Bengal, which took office in February 1969, made peasant mobilization its first priority. The CPI(M) formed voluntary auxiliary groups, each consisting of five to ten cadres, to encourage the landless labourers and poor peasants to seize land in excess of the legal ceilings and to persuade the sharecroppers to demand their full share of the crop. (Landlords shares often exceeded the legal limit.) The government claimed that it recovered and redistributed 300,000 acres,[12] but the land-seizure movement unleashed class conflict in the countryside. The central government found ample grounds for decrying the breakdown of law and order and dismissing the second United Front government on 19 March 1970. The state government's demise led the CPI(M) to reject large-scale peasant mobilization in favour of peaceful, incremental agrarian reform.

In the seven years that followed the downfall of the second

[11] Bhabani Sen Gupta, *The CPI(M): Promises, Prospects, Problems* (New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, 1979), p. 42.

[12] Ibid., p. 76. According to Marcus Franda, the CPI(M) claimed to have distributed 200,000 acres of land under the second United Front government. Marcus Franda, *Radical Politics in West Bengal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971).

United Front government, the CPI(M) continued to organize among the peasantry. Its efforts bore fruit: in the 1977 Legislative Assembly elections the Left Front won 230 out of 290 seats; the CPI(M) 177 seats represented an absolute majority. In the 1982 elections the Left Front coalition won 238 seats and the CPI(M) 174 seats. In the 1987 elections the Left coalition won 251 seats and the CPI(M) 186 seats.

The following sections analyse the government's major reforms in the industrial and, particularly, the rural areas, where it has concentrated its efforts. The state government has greater constitutional power to sponsor agrarian reform than urban reform. Moreover, given the fact that three-fourths of West Bengal's population is rural, the CPI(M) has earned greater dividends by concentrating on the agrarian sphere.

The Urban–Industrial Sphere

The Left Front government inherited a negative industrial growth rate; since 1977–8 it has 'achieved' stagnation. The obstacles to industrial growth are formidable. Because there is little demand for West Bengal's major industries, numerous units are either 'sick' or closed. Nor have new industries been established in West Bengal since 1964. Private investors fear labour shortages, power scarcity, and labour unrest, which drove away many industries under previous leftist governments. The central government has undertaken little public investment.

Under such dire conditions, the Left Front government has given priority to stimulating investment and curtailing working-class militancy. At its fifteenth state party congress in West Bengal, the CPI(M) declared that there was nothing wrong or 'un-Marxian' about seeking participation by the private sector and multinational corporations in industrialization. The report denied that there was any contradiction between the Left government's approach and the objective of 'weakening and finally destroying domestic and foreign monopoly capital'. West Bengal's chief minister, Jyoti Basu, even visited the United States to seek World Bank loans and multinational investments. The government has started a duty-free export and electronics zone. It has revived the Labour Advisory Board to strengthen collective bargaining procedures and has dissuaded workers from striking. It has prohibited *gherao*—a workers' tactic of encircling management to apply pressure.

Citing a Reserve Bank of India study, Manoranjan Rai, president of the CPI(M) trade union CITU (the Centre of Industrial Trade Unions) in West Bengal, boasted in an interview that worker militancy no longer caused capital flight from West Bengal. Nirmal Bose, minister of industry under the second administration and minister of food and supplies under the third administration, asserted that labour unrest was far greater in the state of Maharashtra, than in West Bengal where trade unions were more 'responsible'. Rai and Bose may well be right. According to a West Bengal government study, in 1977 there were 206 strikes and 191 lockouts; strikes accounted for 52 per cent and lockouts for 48 per cent of all work stoppages. By contrast, in 1983 there were only 32 strikes and 139 lockouts; strikes accounted for 19 per cent and lockouts for 81 per cent of all work stoppages. Likewise, of the number of workdays lost in 1977, 12 per cent resulted from strikes and 88 per cent from lockouts, whereas in 1983 strikes were responsible for 6 per cent and lockouts for 94 per cent.[13] The government's successful attempts to subdue labour and empower management may also have adversely affected workers' wages.[14]

In the urban sphere, the Left Front government's failure to improve transportation, sanitation, and other civic services has seriously damaged its credibility. The government correctly denies responsibility for the problems caused by Calcutta's population density and points to the vast influx of immigrants from Bangladesh and Assam. Yet, the fact remains that it accords low priority to ameliorating the appalling urban conditions.

The Agrarian Sphere

Whereas the second United Front government directed peasant organizations to engage in land and crop seizures, the Left Front government directs bureaucrats to maintain law and order during the harvesting season. The extent and duration of political agitations have also declined since the Left Front government assumed office. When interviewed, the land and land reforms minister under the second Left Front ministry, Benoy Chowdhury, argued

[13] *Labour in West Bengal, 1983* (Calcutta: Department of Labour, Government of West Bengal, Sree Saraswaty Press, 1983), p. 11.

[14] Ibid., p. 110.

that political quiescence in the countryside resulted from the government's success in curtailing landlord repression, which had eliminated the need for mass mobilization.

The Left Front government increased the responsibilities of the West Bengal State Planning Advisory Board for overseeing agricultural development in 1983. The board has closely linked efforts to achieve redistribution and growth. According to Asim Dasgupta, who rose from membership on the board to become the finance minister under the third Left Front government administration, small farms (of the area 2.7 acres) have the highest cropping intensity in West Bengal, since poor peasants compensate for their lack of capital with their labour. Improving the economic conditions of the rural poor is thus likely to increase food grain production.[15]

Another priority is irrigation. The board has emphasized minor irrigation schemes, which are especially useful to small farmers. In the western districts, where water is further from the surface than elsewhere in West Bengal, it has sponsored unconventional, local resources-based production. The government's strategy for agricultural growth has recently achieved some success: the state's index of agricultural production increased by 47 per cent, from 103.9 in 1982–3 to a record high of 150.4 in 1983–4.[16] Yet, Kanai Bhowmick, minister for minor irrigation in the second Left Front ministry, admitted in an interview that West Bengal still imports over $ 400 million annually in food grain. Although the state government has focused its efforts on small rather than large landowners and has emphasized redistributive reform over gains in productivity, it has not significantly ameliorated the conditions of the poorest groups.

Shortly after achieving power, the government embarked upon extensive tenancy reforms. It passed legislation curtailing the ability of landowners to evict sharecroppers. In addition, this legislation made the failure of landlords to issue receipts to sharecroppers a

[15] As James Scott points out, although small holders may be more productive per unit of soil, they tend to market less and eat more. Thus, paradoxically, increased small-holder production may imply little gain in what is sold to consumers. Personal correspondence with James Scott, 24 September 1987.

[16] Government of West Bengal, *Economic Review, 1984–5* (Calcutta: West Bengal Government Press, 1985), p. 12.

criminal offense. Such receipts enable sharecroppers to register their names on the land records, thereby ensuring their tenancy rights. The government has made landlords responsible for proving that cultivators cannot remain on the land.

With great fanfare, the Left Front government launched 'Operation Barga', a sharecropper registration campaign, in 1978. After identifying regions containing large numbers of sharecroppers, administrators, peasant organizers, and *panchayat* members held meetings at which they informed sharecroppers of their rights. Benoy Chowdhury estimated, in response to my query, that only 275,000 sharecroppers were bold enough to register before 1977; by December 1984, 1.3 million of 2 million sharecroppers in West Bengal had registered.

The initial mobilizing thrust of 'Operation Barga' gave sharecroppers a sense of efficacy that probably diminished as the campaign languished. As Ashok Rudra points out, because even 75 per cent of the crop often does not cover their subsistence needs, the sharecroppers must retain the landowners' goodwill to secure loans during periods of scarcity.[17] The government has attempted to ameliorate this problem by providing subsidized loans. However, by 1984 it had provided such loans to only about 11 per cent of the newly registered sharecroppers and recipients of vested land.[18] Sharecroppers may fear that landlords will deny them loans for personal expenses such as marriage ceremonies and medical expenses for which institutional loans are not available. Furthermore, a recent study of four villages in West Bengal finds that dependence on landlords prevents the majority of newly registered sharecroppers from obtaining both the share of the produce and the credit to which they are legally entitled.[19]

[17] Ashok Rudra, 'Operation Barga' *in Paschim Banger Bargadar* (Calcutta: Kathasilpa, 1981), translated from the Bengali, p. 40.

[18] *Budget Statement by Benoy Krishna Chowdhury, Minister in Charge of Land and Land Reforms Department, West Bengal, 1985–86* (Calcutta: West Bengal Government Press, 1985), pp. 2–3.

[19] Kirstgen Westergaard, 'People's Participation, Local Government, and Rural Development: The Case of West Bengal', India Research Report No. 8, Center for Development Research, Copenhagen, March 1986, pp. 80–1.

A survey of fourteen villages in West Bengal found that only 20 per cent of sharecroppers retained 75 per cent of the crop whereas about 71 per cent retained 50 per cent of the crop. Registered sharecroppers were no more likely

An even more serious question concerns the overall direction of the government's tenancy reforms. In contrast to many states that have abolished tenancy altogether, West Bengal's reforms are likely to entrench sharecropping arrangements. The consequences are questionable both on grounds of efficiency and equity. Compared to the landowners, the sharecroppers have fewer incentives to invest in cultivation. Furthermore, as Ajit Ghosh notes, security of tenure and enforcement of the rent law are likely to increase differentiation between the newly registered, economically strengthened sharecroppers and the landless households.[20]

Alongside sharecropper registration, the government has redistributed land, much of which previous governments had vested. Compared to other Indian states, the extent of land redistribution in West Bengal is impressive. Out of roughly 4.5 million acres of vested land nationwide, West Bengal accounts for 1.2 million acres; the Left Front government has redistributed more than half of this latter amount.[21] When it took office in 1977, 2.5 million households were landless or nearly landless; by the end of 1984 the government had distributed nearly 800,000 acres to about 1.6 million of these families.[22]

In West Bengal, as in other parts of the country, there are formidable obstacles to land redistribution. In addition to the common practice of registering land under fictitious names, land-

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than unregistered sharecroppers to retain a large share of the crop. Nripendra Bandhopadhyaya and Associates, *Evaluation of Land Reform Measures in West Bengal: A Report* (Bangkok: The Asian Employment Program ICO/ARTEP, June 1985), p. 47.

[20] Ajit Kumar Ghosh, 'Agrarian Reform in West Bengal: Objectives, Achievements, and Limitations', ILO World Employment Program Working Paper, Geneva, May 1980, p. 24.

[21] Nripendra Bandhopadhyaya *et al.*, *Evaluation of Land Reform Measures in West Bengal*, op. cit., p. 14. The authors of this study note that the figures for the amount of land vested in West Bengal compared to other parts of India are somewhat inflated because they include land vested under the Estates Acquisition Act, which in other parts of India fell under the Zamindari Abolition Acts. Only the Land Reform Act in West Bengal is strictly comparable to ceiling laws in other parts of the country.

[22] Under an Act passed in 1978, the government also provided 184,000 people with titles to the small plots of land on which they lived. *Budget Statement by Benoy Krishna Chowdhury*, op. cit., pp. 2–3.

lords have devised various means of profiting from their vested land. By obtaining a court injunction, a landlord can block land redistribution for decades. During this period, he can cultivate it surreptitiously, sell it, or convert it into non-agricultural land that is not covered by the land ceiling laws. An interview with P. C. Bannerjee, secretary for land reforms, revealed that corrupt bureaucrats often collude with the landlords to prevent land redistribution.

In 1981, the Left Front government passed the Second Agrarian Land Reform Act. The watered-down version of the Act that the central government approved will doubtless prevent the Left Front government from vesting another million acres of land as it had planned.[23] But even the most rigorous enforcement of ceiling laws would not eliminate the gross inequalities in landownership. With an average of less than one-third of an acre per person, West Bengal has one of the lowest 'land/man' ratios on the subcontinent.[24]

The government has emphasized sharecropper registration over land redistribution partly because the former is more likely to consolidate the support of small and middle peasants and less likely to incur opposition from large landowners. Even its methods of redistributing land are designed to increase the pool of small landowners without effectively redressing the problem of land hunger. Thus it has been extremely reluctant to experiment with collective or cooperative farming, although the average size of holding (0.6 acres for recent recipients of vested land) is not economically viable. Biplab Dasgupta, a CPI(M) official and director of the CADP, West Bengal's largest rural development agency, asserted that peasants gain a far greater sense of security from individual ownership. Nihar Bose, minister of co-operatives under the second Left Front government administration, stated flatly that 'full cooperation is only possible under socialism'. Consequently, it is misguided to promote co-operatives in the present context.

The experiences of co-operatives in other agrarian contexts have been so mixed that one cannot assume the likelihood of their

[23] Asim Dasgupta, *Rural Development Planning under the Left Front Government in West Bengal* (Calcutta: Information and Cultural Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal, 1981), p. 8.

[24] Bandhopadhyaya *et al.*, *Evaluation of Land Reform Measures in West Bengal*, op. cit., p. 9.

success in West Bengal. However, rather than exploring alternatives to the standard models of co-operatives, the Left Front government has simply adopted the Congress government's limited conception of co-operatives as distributive mechanisms. The Left Front government has thereby disregarded the possibility that co-operatives might reduce class differentiation, facilitate the adoption of new technology, and challenge the conservatizing consequences of private property ownership.

The government's tendency to underrepresent agricultural labourers relative to middle peasants is also exemplified by its approach to the issue of minimum wages. The Congress government established the minimum wages rate in 1975. Five years later, the Left Front government had still not increased this rate. Nor had it achieved either minimum or equal wages (for men and women) in the dozen villages surveyed in 1982. Three years later, a trip to Midnapur revealed that wages in the harvesting season had increased significantly and the disparity had significantly narrowed between men's and women's wages. Yet, in none of the villages that I visited were men or women receiving the legally mandated minimum wage.

The CPI(M)'s efforts to enforce minimum wage laws appear to have been limited. Although in 1979–80, the party organized relatively few wage strikes during the harvesting season, the incidence of strikes had further declined by 1985. Even if the CPI(M) considers strikes disruptive or ineffective, it could better use institutional channels for attaining minimum wages. For example, the Left Front government could increase the number of minimum wage inspectors in the state and thereby reduce their workload.[25]

The Panchayat Reforms

If one of the CPI(M)'s primary goals is to redistribute productive assets, another is to decentralize political power. It has attempted to do so through the panchayats, which were traditionally controlled by rural vested interests. Despite central government

[25] Boudhayan Chattopadhyaya, *Agrarian Structure, Tensions, Movements, and Peasant Organizations in West Bengal, 1936–76*, vol. 1, part 2, *The Post-Independence Period* (Calcutta: CRESIDA, 1983), p. 100.

opposition, the Left Front government had political parties contest the panchayat elections. In 1978 the CPI(M) won 67 per cent of the 55,801 seats in the three-tiered village, block, and district panchayats. In the subsequent panchayat elections in 1983 the CPI(M) once again secured a majority of votes, although this time it lost seats to the Congress-I in the block-level *panchayat samitis* and the district-level *zila parishads*.[26] The CPI(M)'s performance was even more impressive in the 1988 panchayat elections: it won 70 per cent of seats in the *gram panchayats*, 79 per cent in the panchayat samitis, and 91 per cent in the zila parishads.

The government made the panchayats responsible for implementing a variety of rural development schemes and placed substantial resources at their disposal. It ensured them the equivalent of the annual taxes they collected, a portion of land revenue, and control over vested land and water tanks in the areas. In 1983–4, the West Bengal government gave the panchayat over $ 300 million, an average of about $ 50,000 to each gram panchayat.[27]

The government placed block-, subdivision-, and district-level bureaucrats at the panchayats' service. Civil servants initially resisted abdicating their authority to the newly empowered panchayats. To day, relations between higher-ranking bureaucrats and panchayat members seem to be relatively harmonious. In fact, a few bureaucrats have demonstrated even greater commitment

[26] In the gram panchayat elections, the CPI(M) won 60 per cent and Congress-I won 7 per cent of the seats in 1978, whereas in 1983 Congress-I won 27 per cent and the CPI(M) 59 per cent of the seats. In the panchayat samiti elections, the CPI(M) won 68 per cent and Congress-I won 5 per cent of the seats in 1978, whereas the CPI(M) won 65 per cent and Congress-I won 26 per cent of the seats in 1983. In the zilla parishad elections, the CPI(M) won 85 per cent and Congress-I 11 per cent in 1978; in 1983, the CPI(M) won 85 per cent and Congress-I 11 per cent in 1978; in 1983 the CPI(M) won 82 per cent and Congress-I won 16 per cent of the seats. However, these figures exaggerate the Congress party's gains: although many Congress candidates ran as Independents in the 1978 elections, they ran under their party banner in 1983. The Independent vote dropped from 25 per cent to 6 per cent in the gram panchayat elections and from 20 per cent to 4 per cent in the panchayat samiti elections between 1978 and 1983. These figures were supplied by Surya Mishra, the chairperson of the zilla parishad for Midnapur district, on 15 March 1985.

[27] Tarun Ganguly, 'The Role of the Panchayats', *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 22 May 1983, p. 9.

than CPI(M) functionaries to government reforms. However, conflicts between lower-ranking bureaucrats and panchayat members at the block level have persisted.

The panchayats have to some extent fulfilled the government's intention of decentralizing and democratizing the administration. Before 1978, Asim Dasgupta recalled, the central government penetrated no further down than the district level, the state governments as far down as the block level, where it posted about fifteen staff members. The rural poor thus found official channels blocked. However, the panchayats embody many of the undemocratic, inegalitarian features of the larger society. As Tables 10.1 and 10.2 illustrate, panchayats overrepresent the landowning cultivators and underrepresent the landless labourers sharecroppers, relative to their proportions in the population.

The government's overrepresentation of the middle class is also manifest in the social backgrounds of the panchayat members. The underrepresentation of agricultural labourers and sharecroppers may contribute in turn to the panchayats' laxity in enforcing minimum wage laws and ensuring sharecropper registration.

The panchayats are also unrepresentative in another respect: given their inability to formulate policies, they enable the state government to penetrate down to the village level but scarcely enable villagers to communicate their grievances back to Calcutta. The State Planning Advisory Board has recently extended the scope of decentralization reforms by associating the panchayats with district- and block-level planning committees. However, these local bodies still lack autonomous decision-making ability. Indeed, the *mandal panchayats* in Karnataka, which have assumed responsibility for local education, health, and development, exercise much greater autonomy than the West Bengal panchayats.

The Dilemmas of Radical Reform

The Dual-Stage Strategy

Given the state's impoverishment, as Benoy Chowdhury informed me, agrarian capitalist development was essential to increasing the purchasing power of the rural poor and providing capital accumulation for industrialization. Its absence would perpetuate West Bengal's dependence on the central government and international

TABLE 10.1: Occupational Distribution of Gram Panchayat Members

Occupation	Percentage
Owner-cultivators:	
owning below 2 acres	21.7
owning between 2 and 5 acres	14.3
owning more than 5 acres	14.7
Total	50.7
Sharecroppers	1.8
Landless labourers	4.8
Others (non-agriculturalists)	42.7

Source: Development and Planning Department, West Bengal Government, 1979.

Note: This table is based on a survey of one hundred gram panchayats conducted by the government in early 1979. Note that non-agriculturalists and owner-cultivators are likely to be more numerous, while sharecroppers and landless labourers are likely to be fewer in the panchayat samitis and the zilla parishads.

TABLE 10.2: Distribution of Landownership, 1970–1

Acres	Size of household holding household (%)	Area(%)
0.0	9.78	–
0.01–1.0	46.74	6.83
1.0–2.5	21.10	20.46
2.5–5.0	12.64	25.69
5.0–7.5	5.38	18.38
7.5–10.0	1.92	9.34
Above 10	2.44	19.30
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: National Sample Survey, 26th round, report no. 215, vol. 1 (West Bengal), p. 66.

agencies. Although it would be neither possible nor desirable to curb agrarian capitalism, Biplab Dasgupta argued, the government could curtail its exploitative consequences by redistributing land, increasing wages, and providing credit facilities to the rural poor.

The compulsions to foster capitalist development are strong in West Bengal, one of the poorest states in India. The percentage of the rural poor living below the poverty line increased from 40 per cent to 66 per cent between 1960–1 and 1973–4. In India, the increase during the same period was from 42 per cent to 48 per cent. By the mid-1970s, thanks to industrial and agricultural stagnation, West Bengal contained the largest percentage of the population below the poverty line among the states.[28]

The CPI(M) had pursued a strategy of class conciliation to encourage rural entrepreneurship. Since obtaining power in 1977, it has distinguished between *jotedar*s, whom it regards as 'class enemies', and rich peasants, whom it regards as allies. Thus, by 1981, Pramode Dasgupta, the former state secretary of the West Bengal CPI(M), could comment: 'We do not regard the big farmer as a representative of feudal monopoly interests. Our class struggle is against landed jotedars, not against the big farmer.'[29] More recently, the CPI(M) has called for a unified *krishak* movement, which will include sharecroppers, marginal and small peasants, fishermen, artisans, and crafts-persons.

To appease the rich peasants, the CPI(M) has not levied a centrally sanctioned agricultural income tax. It has demand higher procurement prices for agricultural commodities that would primarily benefit middle and rich peasants. The CPI(M) has exempted middle peasants from the procurement levy if they own less than four acres of irrigated land or six acres of unirrigated land. Although higher prices might encourage employers to pay higher wages, such an outcome is by no means certain. Moreover, higher procurement prices would increase food costs for the rural poor.

The CPI(M) has compromised the interests of the poorest rural groups by continually appeasing the middle and rich peasants. It has shied away from conferring landownership rights on tenants, sponsoring wage strikes, and experimenting with cooperative farming. For years it resisted organizing the agricultural labourers separately from the landowning peasants. The All-India Agricultural Labourers Union, which it recently formed, is not yet active in West Bengal.

[28] Montek S. Ahluwalia, 'Rural Poverty in India', World Bank Staff Working Papers No. 279, 1978, Table 1b, p. 10.

[29] Bhabani Sen Gupta, 'Striving for Unity', *India Today*, 1–15 January 1981, p. 99.

Problems of Achieving Subnational Socialism

When the Left Front government was elected in 1977, it enjoyed close relations with the Janata government in New Delhi. Centre–state relations quickly soured after Indira Gandhi's re-election in 1980. While the Congress alleged that the communist government was unable to maintain political stability, the CPI(M) contended that the Congress was disrupting law and order to create a pretext for dissolving the state assembly.[30] The Left Front govern-ment's relations with the Congress after Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister were strained. The Janata Dal government, although more favourably predisposed towards West Bengal, was short-lived.

But regardless of which party is in power at the national level, the relation between the central and state governments remains unequal. The constitution provides more extensive legislative powers to the Centre than to the states. Even those matters under state control are hedged with qualifications. Although agrarian reforms fall with the state government's jurisdiction, they can be overturned by the central government. Thus, in 1983 the West Bengal Legislative Assembly submitted an amended version of the Land Reform Act of 1979 for presidential assent. After procrasti-nating for five years, the Centre finally approved a watered-down version of the Act in 1987.

The governor of the state, whom the president appoints, has significant discretionary powers that indirectly give the Centre considerable influence. For example, he or she may reserve the bills passed by the provincial Assembly for presidential consideration. The chief minister can also be confronted with serious resistance from central government bureaucrats posted to West Bengal. Asim Dasgupta pointed out to me that although the state govern-ment has some power to implement agrarian reform because of its control over land and labour, it is virtually powerless in the industrial sphere where capital is of greater importance.

Until the mid-1950s, West Bengal benefited from being situated near certain vital raw materials, notably coal. However, the union government deprived West Bengal of its comparative advantage

[30] The constitution permits the central government to declare 'president's rule' in states in which it deems the elected state government unable to maintain law and order. Until Legislative Assembly elections are held, the central government rules that state from New Delhi.

by equalizing freight transportation costs for coal throughout India. The state government also alleges that the Congress failed to increase West Bengal's capacity for thermal power generation in the 1960s and 1970s. Most importantly, the Centre has been reluctant to invest in industry and to grant West Bengal industrial licenses.

State governments are dependent on three sources of revenue: their own taxes, as denoted in the constitution; a share of centrally raised taxes, as specified by the Finance Commission; and Plan allocations. The Left Front government claims that the Centre has systematically deprived West Bengal of these resources. Between 1980–1 and 1984–5, per capita central Plan assistance was Rs 132 to West Bengal and an average of Rs 214 to other states. Moreover, 70 per cent of its allotment was in loans with interest.[31] In 1984–5 a constitutionally mandated finance commission recommended that the Centre give West Bengal an additional $ 250 million, nearly 15 per cent of the state's total budgeted expenditure. For what the Left Front government regards as contrived procedural reasons, the Centre rejected the commission's recommendations. As a result, according to Ashok Mitra, 40 per cent of the state's total capital expenditure was channeled into debt repayment that year.[32]

The central government has also refused to share revenues from the corporate income tax, which is significantly more elastic than personal income tax. Moreover, rather than increase excise duty, which it shares with the states, the Centre has raised the administered prices of commodities like coal, iron, and steel, which the government monopolies produce. This rise in administered prices is partly responsible for inflation.

Given the enormous constraints imposed by the Centre, the Left Front government has emphasized, in Biplab Dasgupta's words, that the government 'is not in power but simply in office. Power rests with the Congress party in New Delhi'. But this attempt to educate Bengalis about the impediments that Congress places before the Left Front government is likely to elicit the view that a peasant in Midnapur expressed: 'The CPI(M) keeps telling us that it doesn't control power; Congress controls power. So we realized we should vote for the Congress party instead.'

[31] *The Statesman* (Calcutta), 15 December 1984; *The Business Standard* (Calcutta), 26 January 1987.

[32] *The Business Standard*, 28 March 1985.

In continually highlighting the central government constraints, the CPI(M) implicitly denies its own culpability. According to one senior government bureaucrat, the state government's inefficiency often prevents it from making full use of the centrally allotted funds; by failing to submit 'utilization certificates' for previously funded projects, it forgoes new allocations. In 1979–80, I heard government officials complain that the Centre was denying West Bengal food grains to which it was entitled under the Food for Work Programme.[33] By 1985 the central government had replaced Food for Work with two similar but better funded schemes: the National Rural Employment Programme and the Rural Landless Employment Generation Programme. However, the Centre withheld the remaining entitlement because West Bengal had not used the existing funds and lagged behind most states in implementing these programmes.

Within the constraints that the centre creates for state governments are opportunities the CPI(M) has only begun to exploit. As Kohli points out, the Centre possesses only a few formal mechanisms to influence the state governments. It thus relies heavily on informal mechanisms of control through its party organization.[34] These have proved singularly ineffective in West Bengal because the state unit of the Congress party is rife with factional feuds.

Indeed, an important source of the CPI(M)'s repeated electoral success in West Bengal is the Congress-I's growing weakness. The Congress party's dismal performance in the 1987 elections, when it captured forty seats, was particularly telling, for it had confronted more adverse conditions in previous elections. In 1969, it managed to win fifty-five seats although it faced the electorate's wrath at having connived with the governor to topple the first United Front government. The Congress won twenty seats in 1977 when it encountered public outrage over the Emergency.[35] By contrast, although Congress went to the polls under comparatively favourable conditions in 1987, its disorganization, factionalism, and ideological incoherence all contributed to its overwhelming defeat.

[33] 'Politics of Food Supplies', p. 210.

[34] Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India*, op. cit., pp. 92–3.

[35] This argument is developed by Amulya Ganguli, 'The Outcome in Bengal: Why Congress–I Lost Its Way', *The Statesman* (Calcutta), 30 March 1987.

The CPI(M)'s moderation exceeds the dictates of the external political environment. Compared to his mother, Rajiv Gandhi was more accommodating to opposition-controlled state governments. For example, he interpreted the governor's role as a non-partisan figure, obligated to respect the wishes of state legislators rather than those of the central government. The short-lived Janata Dal government further eased whatever fears the CPI(M) may still have had about central government intervention.

Coalitions and Compromises

The dilemmas and constraints surrounding the CPI(M)'s approach to coalition building differ at the national and state levels. Given the weakness of the opposition and the strength of Congress-I, the CPI(M)'s national leadership has endorsed electoral alliances with ideologically diverse political parties. The West Bengal unit has criticized the central leadership's alliance policy for compromising fundamental principles. In West Bengal, in contrast to other parts of India, the CPI(M) allies exclusively with other leftist parties. However, even in West Bengal, coalitions have entailed compromises and administrative inefficiencies.

For several years after the Left Front government's election in 1977, relations between its six constituents were relatively harmonious. [The three largest members were the CPI(M), the Forward Bloc, and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP); much less significant were the Marxist Forward Bloc, the Revolutionary Communist party of India, and the Biplabi Bangla Congress.] Tensions have since mounted and become especially acute around elections. In preparation for the 1982 Legislative Assembly elections, the CPI(M) included the CPI, the West Bengal Socialist Party, and the Democratic Socialist Party within the Left Front. Echoing the West Bengal CPI(M)'s criticism of its central leadership, the older Left Front constituents criticized the CPI(M) for making the Front too broad based. Coalition partners also questioned the CPI(M)'s re-allocation of ministerial protfolios.

Tensions further increased during the panchayat elections the following year over the extent to which the CPI(M) allowed coalition partners to nominate electoral candidates. With the 1984 parliamentary elections, divisions re-emerged: its coalition partners joined oppositional forces in criticizing the CPI(M) for

non-performance in office and for poor inter-departmental co-ordination. The CPI(M), in turn, blamed Front members for jealously safeguarding their ministerial prerogatives. 'The basest instincts emerge in interparty feuds', commented former finance minister Ashok Mitra; 'each minister says "reform, streamlining, yes—but not in my ministry"'.

By the 1988 panchayat elections, disputes between coalition partners erupted in open, bitter rivalry. The CPI(M), RSP, and the Forward Bloc competed with one another for 25,000 seats on which they could not reach agreement. Jyoti Basu described the demands of the Forward Bloc and the RSP for more seats as unjustified and urged voters to defeat those who were hurting left unity. Kamal Guha, agricultural minister in the third Left Front government ministry and member of the Forward Bloc, had slogans plastered around Coochbehar district that read: *Rajiv hatao, desh bachao, CPM hatao, gram bachao* ('Remove Rajiv to save the country, remove the CPI(M) to save the villages'). RSP leader Debabrata Bandhopadhyaya accused the CPI(M) of trying to annihilate its partners in a Stalinist manner. Ten days before the poll, the CPI(M) claimed that the Forward Bloc and RSP had allied with Congress-I.

Even more significant disputes have emerged since 1987. One source is the policy question of whether Front partners have the right to launch agitations under their own party banners and, in particular, whether they have the right to launch agitations against the CPI(M). Another source of division has been allegations of CPI(M) corruption by coalition partners. Jatin Chakraborty, the RSP minister of public works, made the most damaging charge when he accused Jyoti Basu of privately instructing the government to promote the business interests of Bengal Lamps Works, in which Basu's son was active. The crisis threatened to destroy the government until RSP instructed Chakraborty to resign. However, the Bengal Lamps scandal, along with another allegation of government kickbacks—to the Calcutta Tramways Company—have tarnished both the image of the chief minister and relations between Front partners.

Why should the CPI(M) continue to participate in a coalition government when it won an absolute majority of Legislative Assembly seats? Administrative inefficiency is a significant but still relatively minor inconvenience compared to the larger danger that coalition partners might undermine the Left Front from within.

Old guard leaders fear that if leftist parties cease to be allies, they could easily become enemies. Furthermore, the CPI(M) is eager to counter the image it gained under previous United Front governments by proving itself to be a trustworthy ally.

However, on balance, growing acrimony within the Front has not weakened the CPI(M). In fact, with the 1987 Legislative Assembly elections, in which the CPI(M) captured 187 of 294 Assembly seats, Front partners appeared to be virtually redundant. As a result the CPI(M) kept the major portfolios and took over housing, health, industry, and engineering from the RSP and the Forward Bloc. The Left Front government is much stronger and more durable than either previous United Front governments or coalitions in other parliamentary democracies.

The Hazards of Power

The CPI(M) leaders frankly admit that they were not prepared to win the 1977 elections, let alone occupy office for three terms. One important hindrance to governing West Bengal was the party's relatively small size. Thus, at its Salkiya Plenum in 1978, the CPI(M) Central Committee decided to double the West Bengal unit's membership. Accordingly, it relaxed the strict criteria that had formerly governed admission to the party. Manoranjan Hazra, a high ranking CPI(M) leader in West Bengal, has sharply and eloquently criticized this policy. Hazra argues that although the CPI(M) had only 35,000 members in 1977, it won the Legislative Assembly elections and formed the Left Front government. However, despite having 118,000 members by 1984, Congress-I emerged four times stronger in the parliamentary elections than it had been in 1980. In Hazra's words:

> Tragically the Party has enrolled members without examining their past, aptitudes and motivations. All prospective members must be screened. But with the CPI(M) leaders at the branch and local committee levels eager to strengthen their own positions and push their personal interests, corrupt and anti-social elements have been enrolled as members. Such reckless enrollment has led to a phenomenal increase in numbers. Quality has suffered in the bargain.[36]

[36] This is a portion of an article Hazra published in the Bengali daily *Bartaman*, on 13 January 1985. The CPI(M) suspended Hazra from the party

The CPI(M) has demonstrated greater laxity as its class coalition has broadened. For example, the Left Front government tacitly permits public employees to arrive at Writers' Building, the state government headquarters, toward 11 a.m. rather than 10 a.m. each day because of transportation difficulties. It fact, personal observations suggest that bureaucrats often arrive around noon and, after frequent tea breaks and a leisurely lunch, begin their exodus from the office by 3 p.m. A similar attempt to broaden its class coalition is evident in the rural areas, where the CPI(M) fears antagonizing the dominant classes. It makes electoral sense for the CPI(M) to direct its appeals to landowning peasants when agricultural labourers only constitute a fourth of the rural working population.

As long as the CPI(M) chooses to remain in office it will be forced to compromise certain ideals—although fewer perhaps than it believes: the Left Front government has scarcely tested the limits of tolerance in West Bengal. It is important to underline the element of choice in the CPI(M)'s strategy. Ashok Mitra, among the most radical party leaders, persuasively argued that the CPI(M) should risk electoral defeat in order to politicize the electorate. The longer the CPI(M) has remained in office, the more its exercise of power has become an end in itself.

The Inner Dynamics of Communist Parties

If, as noted above, the Left Front government has been weakened by its laxity, the CPI(M)'s overemphasis on discipline, to the detriment of creative grassroots participation, has also been a critical source of its reformism.[37] The tendency is especially evident in communist parties that uphold democratic centralism. At its Vijaywada congress in 1982 and at a meeting of the West Bengal unit the following year, the CPI(M) reaffirmed its belief in democratic centralist principles. The Vijaywada report argues that a hierarchical chain of command is essential to combating central government repression and making the party an efficient instrument of change.

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upon his publication of this and another highly critical article. Hazra served five times as a member of the Legislative Assembly and once as a member of Parliament.

[37] Panitch makes a similar argument in *Working-Class Politics in Crisis*, op. cit., p. 50.

The CPI(M)'s commitment to democratic centralist principles seems to be born, above all, from its desire to maintain the party's cohesion. To some extent this strategy has borne fruit, for the CPI(M) is not plagued by the factionalism that characterizes other Indian political parties. Democratic centralist principles have also enabled the CPI(M) to check opportunism, patronage, and corruption in the panchayats. A CPI(M) booklet published just before the 1983 panchayat elections justified the exclusive rights of top-ranking leaders to nominate candidates on grounds of democratic centralist principles.

However, democratic centralism justifies the unquestioned leadership of the party's guard. Although theoretically the politburo's decisions are subject to ratification by the central committee, in fact it is commonly believed that several politburo veterans draft every major party decision. According to its own estimates, the CPI(M) dismissed 442 party members in West Bengal for corruption, lack of discipline, and anti-party activity after a 'rectification campaign' in 1983.[38] Dissident party leaders refused, when questioned, to describe their activities.

Democratic centralist principles have enabled the CPI(M) to maintain strict control over its mass organizations. Manoranjan Rai justified such 'top-down' control in the case of trade unions on the grounds that the party would ultimately be held responsible for the CITU's actions. In any case, he asserted, it was unthinkable that there could be substantial differences between the party and the union when a 'people's government' occupied office. His comment betrays a widespread belief that such disparate groups as women, youth, workers, and peasants share identical interests, all of which the leftist government represents.

In short, democratic centralism is a critical source of the CPI(M)'s deradicalization. Deprived of significant influence or understanding of its inner workings, many of its lower-ranking cadres lack commitment. Isolated from the realities of peasants' lives, the party as a whole cannot champion their struggles. Its Vijaywada congress report acknowledges that the CPI(M) has failed to 'give sufficient attention to the spontaneous struggles... by the common people against social oppression'. Party activities

[38] *The Telegraph*, 2 December 1984. My field research suggests that in many cases, expulsions facilitated the weeding out of dissidents.

have not facilitated 'democratic participation of common peasants in decision making'. The report notes that the party's sectarianism has impeded joint actions with other progressive forces.[39] Yet it does not recognize the link between the CPI(M)'s organizational weaknesses and democratic centralist principles.

Conclusion

If, in evaluating the Left Front government's record over the past thirteen years, the CPI(M) is judged by the standard specified by Panitch in the European context or by Rudra for India, it must be deemed a failure. Government reforms neither challenge the existing state and class structure nor create the groundwork for more radical alternatives. However, given the CPI(M)'s moderate intentions, coupled with the absence of revolutionary conditions in West Bengal today, these stringent criteria are irrelevant. It is more appropriate to analyse the extent to which the CPI(M) has fulfilled the reformist goals that Esping-Andersen and Stephens in the European context and Kohli in the Indian context consider as standards for social democracy.

The CPI(M)'s major achievement has been to enable the rural poor to obtain improved living conditions and greater sense of dignity. A visit to the drought-stricken regions of western Midnapur in 1979–80 revealed that large numbers of villagers had left destitute family members to search for employment in the plains during the lean seasons. Five years later, villagers in the same region spent these periods in their newly constructed homes, cultivating their own plots of land. Material betterment had increased their sense of efficacy. Despite the shortcomings in its conception and implementation, 'Operation Barga' has unquestionably increased the sharecroppers' incomes, provided them with greater security, and reduced their dependence on the landlords.

The relative absence of violence against women, minorities, and the lowest castes and classes in West Bengal has not earned the CPI(M) the credit it deserves. An 'absence' by definition constitutes an invisible achievement, especially because West Bengal has had

[39] Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Documents of the Eleventh Congress of the CPI(M), Vijaywada, 26–31 January 1982* (New Delhi: Desraj Chadha, 1982), pp. 243–5.

a tradition of harmonious caste and 'communal' relations since the partition in 1948, quite independently of the CPI(M)'s actions. However, there is little precedent or historical basis for some of the most virulent 'communal' conflicts that have occurred elsewhere in India in the recent period. Given West Bengal's substantial Muslim population and the still bitter memories of the British partition of the province, Hindu–Muslim conflict could well have been severe under a less principled government.[40]

However, when one refers to the standards of successful social democracies, one finds that the Left Front government has scarcely implemented the most minimal reforms. As opposed to the dynamic that Esping-Andersen and Stephens suggest, the Left Front government sponsored its most ambitious reforms—concerning sharecroppers and the panchayat—in its first two years in office. These reforms gave the rural poor a sense of efficacy, strength, and optimism. Yet, as Ashok Mitra ruefully admitted to me several years later, 'We failed to maintain our radical fervor. We failed to sustain the chemistry we created when we were elected.'

One of the most frequent recent criticisms of the government concerns its lethargy, or, as it is often described, its 'non-performance'. Although most evident in Calcutta, the problem is also apparent in the rural areas. For example, the central rather than the state governments has introduced most of the programmes designed to improve education, employment, and health facilities for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, as they are officially designated.

It might be contended that West Bengal provides a poor test of Esping-Andersen's argument: the economy has not been expanding, the government does not control the business cycle, and the basis for the creation of a new class coalition does not fully exist; the peasantry has not shrunk nor the working class grown. Yet if

[40] Another important achievement of the Left Front that is not directly relevant to the present discussion but should at least be noted in passing is the contribution it has made to national political developments. Despite the apparent powerlessness of state governments, Jyoti Basu, and the CPI(M) more generally, in good part because of its role in West Bengal, have emerged as important players on the national political scene. As it completes its third term in office, the Left Front government also provides an important example to other opposition parties of the possibilities for the relatively stable, uncorrupted exercise of power at the state level.

the parallel is imperfect, the cases have enough in common for West Bengal's experience to illuminate Esping-Andersen's contention.

The Left Front government is among a small number of social democratic regimes that have occupied office for well over a decade. As Andrew Martin argues, a long, continuous tenure in office is critical to setting in motion the dynamic of spiralling reformism.[41] In contrast to most social democracies, which as Przeworski notes, have never won sufficient votes to legislate without other parties' consent, the CPI(M) has secured an absolute majority of seats in West Bengal's Legislative Assembly for three consecutive terms. Moreover, in several respects that Esping-Andersen considers important, the Left Front government's experience resembles that of northern European social democracies: it came to power thanks to peasant support and has increasingly forged a coalition with the middling strata. Whatever the results of its efforts, it has seriously attempted economic expansion.

One can infer from Esping-Andersen that if social democracy is most likely to have radicalizing consequences during periods of growth, it must devise new reforms to maintain its momentum during periods of stagnation. To the extent that possibilities for economic growth are blocked, social democracies can provide their constituencies with unquantifiable political benefits, such as workplace democracy. (The Meidner plan in Sweden provides a good example.) The CPI(M) has barely explored these options.

In keeping with Panitch's argument about the linkages between leftist parties' deradicalization and the diminution of working-class support, the CPI(M) suffered its worst defeats in Calcutta's urban-industrial belt both in the 1985 parliamentary elections and the 1987 Assembly elections. Many reports suggest that workers especially resented the growing unemployment and the government's seeming favouritism toward middle-class public employees. However, given the relatively small size of the industrial working class, the CPI(M)'s growing reformism has not entailed electoral defeat. Indeed, the CPI(M) has broadened its class coalition, as Esping-Andersen stipulates is necessary for social democracy to persist.

[41] Andrew Martin, 'Is Democratic Control of Capitalism Possible? Some Notes towards an Answer' in L. Lindberg *et al.* (eds), *Stress and Contradiction in Modern Capitalism* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1975); and *The Politics of Economic Policy in the United States* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1973).

Both the structural constraints described by Przeworski and Offe and the strategic choices identified by Panitch are critical to explaining the Left Front government's growing moderation. However, for a variety of reasons it is difficult to evaluate the precise significance of each. Although many theorists consider 'structural' synonymous' with 'economic', we have seen that radical reform is impeded as much by political as by economic factors, neither of which the CPI(M) fully controls. Take the example of the CPI(M)'s relationship to the central government: The Left Front government seems no less fearful of being overthrown than of being deprived of resources by the central government.

To make matters even more complicated, on the one hand the CPI(M) exercises greater control than may initially be apparent over the 'external' conditions, while on the other hand the party leadership, organization, and ideology cannot simply be considered freely determined. For example, the CPI(M) exercises an unusual degree of control over coalition arrangements in West Bengal. Conversely, although democratic centralism represents a choice of strategy, it is in many respects predetermined by the trajectory of the international communist movement and the *bhadralok* base of the communist movement in West Bengal. Similarly, the extent to which the CPI(M) has chosen or has been forced by political circumstance to pursue a wholly electoral approach is debatable.

With these considerations in mind, it still appears that the major constraint upon the West Bengal CPI(M) emanates from the contradictory imperatives that are implicit in functioning at the subnational level. At the least this rules out the possibility of outright class struggle, large-scale political mobilization, and a direct challenge to the national state. But the example of Kerala indicates the possibility for a more radical strategy of land reform without necessitating the CPI(M)'s complete abdication of power.

The underdeveloped character of the West Bengal economy also ranks high among apparently intractable obstacles to a more effective reformist approach. However, large-scale capitalist agriculture of the Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh variety is no more feasible than socialization of the economy. Although the CPI(M) has taken the initiative for political reforms to achieve further democratization, it has lagged much further behind with respect to democratization in the economic sphere.

If the small size of the industrial working class might be viewed as impeding the anti-capitalist strategy that Panitch envisages, recall the contention of innumerable revolutionary theorists within the Third World context: the rural proletariat can play a parallel role to industrial workers when the transition to capitalism is incomplete. Indeed, landless agricultural labourers have been a prime source of rural militancy in India. Like industrial workers in the Marxist formulation, agricultural labourers have nothing to lose from their radicalism, for they do not own or control the means of production. Labourers' militancy is often heightened by their experience of subjugation along both caste and class lines. But the CPI(M) has sacrificed the interests of agricultural labourers in much the same way that Panitch argues social democratic parties have sacrificed workers' interests in Western Europe.

Even if the three constraints described earlier—emanating from the unitary features of the federal system, the challenge posed by West Bengal's impoverishment, and the imperatives of coalition building—effectively precluded significant reform, they would still not explain the CPI(M)'s failures with respect to women, the landless, and the *adivasis*. To better understand these failures we must consider the consequences of the CPI(M)'s electoral bent and its adherence to democratic centralist principles set against the backdrop of its bhadralok leadership and middle-class base.

If, as Panitch notes in a different context, the CPI(M)'s actions have not been wholly dictated by the logic of liberal democracy, it is easier to suggest the need for an uncompromising yet feasible strategy than to provide specific guidelines. How might the CPI(M) have avoided succumbing to conservatizing constraints in order to creatively exploit the potential for radical change?

Not only, as noted above, are constraints more malleable than they appear, but a progressive strategy would involve transforming constraints into opportunities. In reviewing the situation of West Bengal, two quite different spheres—agrarian production and cultural relations—provide important illustrations. Although certain aspects of both spheres stifle progressive change today, they contain emancipatory possibilities that the CPI(M) could realize only if it possessed greater political will and vision.

Consider agricultural production. In a densely populated, overwhelmingly agrarian state, land reform must be among the highest priorities of a leftist government. As described above, however, the

Left Front government has pursued land reform in a manner barely distinguishable from that of the Congress governments at the national and state levels. Such an approach is not wholly dictated by legal, constitutional, or economic realities. By rejecting producer cooperatives, for example, the Left Front government denies itself a potentially valuable opportunity to make the optimal use of key economic resources, disseminate socialist ideology, and forge solidaristic relations among the rural poor.

If the Left Front government frequently cites the conservatizing weight of the central government and overarching capitalist context, it seems oblivious of the extent to which Bengali bhadralok culture shapes its actions. Important instances include the government's failure to organize agricultural labourers on a separate basis, frontally attack the dowry system, and support adivasi identity movements. The government thereby renounces the opportunity to mobilize the most oppressed groups.

In an age of scepticism regarding socialist possibilities, it is noteworthy that the Left Front government has survived for so long. Yet the manner in which it has done so is strikingly reminiscent of northern European social democratic governments. In both cases, success in the current period has been achieved through increasing moderation and the depletion of hard-earned cultural and political capital.

PART IV

Social Diversity and Party Politics

PART IV

Social Diversity and Party Politics

11

The Janata Phase: Reorganization and Redirection in Indian Politics[+]

JYOTIRINDRA DAS GUPTA

A mixed sense of relief and apprehension marked the Indian political scene in early 1977 when the continuity of three decades of Congress rule was broken by a stunning electoral verdict. It was a unity of resentment, obviously stronger in intensity and wider in extension in northern India, which transformed disparate opposition parties into a working coalition eager to offer an alternative to the Emergency regime of the preceding two years. The primary object of public resentment was the repressive regime, its architects and defenders represented by the ruling group which controlled the national Congress organization, the government, and the private network of manipulation and control fed by public funds. It is interesting that the Congress leaders who chose to disassociate themselves organizationally at the last moment were largely spared this resentment.

The electoral victory of the Janata coalition and its allies at the central level of the federal polity was based on foundations of variable strength. Since the major issue of the 1977 elections was concerned with how to reverse the authoritarian usurpation of democratic power, the mandate of restoration of the constitutional regime served as the strongest foundation of support for the Janata coalition. However, the weakness of a restorationist mandat lies precisely on the nature of the job implied by it. As soon as the job is accomplished, the political support for it may tend to evaporate. In a country such as India, where a constitutional democratic system has survived six national elections, people might take it for granted even to the extent of forgetting its brief interruption.

[+] Asian Survey, vol. 19, no. 4, April 1979, pp. 390–403.

Ironically, the function of restoration then would yield a thin base of political capital for the new authorities.

Besides restoration of a democratic system, the Janata coalition was, of course, expected to offer a better programme of government. Political groups who had supported the opposition movements during and before the Emergency rule were highly critical of the developmental policies of the Congress party. The election manifesto of the Janata Party and its allies conveyed the impression that the coming to national power of a non-Congress coalition would make a difference in the sphere of developmental policies and programmes. However, even the most ardent supporters of the Janata coalition could not fail to recognize the programmatic gap that separated the components of the hastily formed coalition. Although it does not take much imagination to understand the differences in ideology, preferences, and social bases of these components, ranging from those who came with a Congress(O) background to the socialist and communist components, it is difficult to dismiss the feeling of many supporters that a large margin of common action could be possible if the alternative regime cares to succeed.[1] Even the logic of restoration of constitutionality needs an assurance that a democratically conducted government can either perform better or at least perform no worse than its adversaries. The mandate of performance, however, remained a weak basis for popular appeal because of the general apprehension that dissonant components would not be able to pull themselves together for effective action. During the elections, the performance mandate thus did not amount to much beyond a fond hope that the new authority in power would seriously try to offer programmes of development which would be more responsive to the popular needs than the general record of performance of the Congress party.

The Janata Phase

Now that the new phase of Indian politics following the 1977 elections is entering its third year, the ruling coalition can claim greater durability than even some of its supporters were initially

[1] Statements on perceptions noted here and elsewhere in this paper are based on my interviews in 1977 and 1978.

prepared to concede. The record of the last two years calls for a close examination if one wants to understand the major developments associated with the Janata phase. The Janata Party, the ruling party at the Centre and in a majority of states, has been the centre of attention during this phase. However, an exclusive attention to the formal aspects of the Janata Party will tie us to a conventional language of politics which may obscure the significance of the political changes of the last two years.

Over these years, the diverse components of the inner coalition that constitutes the Janata Party have not become any better integrated than they were in the aftermath of the 1977 electoral victory.[2] Charan Singh's exit from the Cabinet in 1978 and his re-entry in early 1979, and the series of conflicts at the state level between the former members of the Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Jana Sangh components of the party, manifested most recently in the ouster of the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, are a few instances symptomatic of the wide margin of dissension within the Janata ruling party. The impressive peasant rally organized by Charan Singh's faction just before his cabinet re-entry clearly suggests how public mobilization is deliberately kept fragmented so that certain factions retain their bargaining power, not merely for intra-party negotiation but also for extra-party overtures.[3]

The fact is that the ruling party's cohesion of components stems more from the compulsions of office than from any source of informal fellowship. What accounts for the strength of the ruling party is the convenient combination of tightly knit domains of support mobilized by these components and the additional support from allied parties. Three distinct systems of support are involved in this process: governmental leadership building its network of

[2] See the reports on the state of the Janata Party and the perceptions of its organizational leaders in *India Today*, 1–15 January 1979, pp. 5–7. For orientational differences, see, for example, reports of press interviews with Jayaprakash Narayan, Charan Singh, Nanaji Deshmukh, and the article by Surendra Mohan in *Sunday*, Special issue, 14 August 1977, pp. 8–10, 12–19, and ibid., 3 September 1978 for K. Verma's article, 'Chaudhary of the Party', pp. 14–17. For a report on recent component differences, see *Economic and Political Weekly*, 16 December 1978, p. 2023.

[3] The implications of the rally are analysed in the *Far Eastern Economic Review's* cover story, 'Revolt of the Landless Masses', 12 January 1979, pp. 53–5.

support from and beyond the components of the party; component leaders building their organizational domain; and both these sets of leaders reaching out to seek support from other groups and parties. As a result, it may be more useful to focus analytical attention on the Janata system of organizational networks than on the Janata Party itself. Moreover, the flexibility of party factional boundaries may have been increased in the beginning of 1978 when the opposition Congress party was split into two. The complex inter-party manoeuvres that led to the alignment of one section of Congress with the Janata Party in the formation of a state government in Maharashtra in July 1978, for instance, opened up the possibility of Janata leaders reproducing a similar balancing game elsewhere.

One advantage of concentrating on the Janata system is that the conventional manner of evaluating parties can be de-emphasized in analysing the conduct of the Janata leaders. If the standards of party boundary, organizational loyalty, and discipline can be so relaxed, then the acts of dissension which dominate newspaper headlines and occupy the attention of most observers of the Janata party will appear as less important. Another advantage of this approach is that it enables us to study the process of transition of an organizational device that began as a platform of protest before the advent of the Emergency regime.[4] Common suffering during the Emergency gave the protesting parties a common cause. Unexpected popular support brought them to power. And it is office that has so far kept them together with a degree of cohesion that is consistent with the logic of maintaining power. What, then, should be the incentive for an increased degree of cohesion that may not be necessary for maintaining power?

Conduct of Government

If the major components of the Janata coalition have felt no serious compulsion to integrate themselves into a conventionally disciplined party, it does not mean that they have also neglected integrating the official business of government. In fact, the formal

[4] For an analysis of organizational evolution and role of the Janata Party, see Ram Joshi and Kirtidev Desai, 'Towards a More Competitive Party System', *Asian Survey*, November 1978, pp. 1091–1116.

structure of ruling authority, including government and government-supported organizations, in the economic arena has played an energetic role, which has apparently compensated for the deficit in authority resulting from the ruling party's lack of internal integration. Rapid moves to dismantle the structure of the preceding Emergency regime and its attendant atmosphere of uncertainty among administrative personnel seemed to aid the morale of the central administration. Ironically, the domain divisions within the party seemed to offer an incentive to the Janata central ministers to utilize the opportunity of effective administration as a device for building political capital.

This political capital was ostensibly treated as a resource to secure the position of the leaders and their components within the party as well as to create a favourable image among the political public. In this sense, support-building through departmental leadership appeared to acquire a significant value. It is interesting that the external affairs minister with a Jana Sangh legacy, the industries minister from a socialist background, and the agriculture minister with an Akali affiliation—to take a few examples—all have conducted their departmental responsibilities in a manner that has surprised their critics who were earlier quite apprehensive because of their political past and administrative inexperience. In general, despite the fact that most of the ministers were new to the national level of executive responsibility and departmental administration, the relative quality of their performance compared to that of either their more seasoned colleagues or predecessors has impressed both the departmental personnel and the outside clientele.

The phenomenon of rapid graduation of disparate opposition leaders into a fairly coherent team of executive leaders at the federal level indicates the increasing capacity developing in the Indian political system for replacing a political leadership that had, for decades, warned the country of the catastrophes that would follow the end of Congress party dominance. A significant feature of the Janata system is that the reserve capacity of executive resources in politics has been extensively used in the state-level administration led by a variety of political parties, including the Janata, Communist, Akali, and other parties. At the same time, the Janata system has openly encouraged regular co-operation among ideologically distant leaders of different parties on issues of mutual concern. It is difficult to miss the mutual accommodation among the leaders of these parties

manifested at the practical level of policy operation despite frequent affirmations of political differences in public discourse.

Policy Performance

Public assessment of the Janata system, as expressed by either the limited circulation élite press or the wider circulation regional press has usually concentrated on matters that may not be of greatest import for the general populace as well as the longer perspectives on national development. The élite press, distressed as it is by some leaders' eccentricities or organizational problems, rarely address much attention to the relative unity revealed in the field of policy action. Understandably, the regional press has less time for providing a full hearing to the competing claims of different regions and what is implied in treating these claims in the context of the new federal political alignments. That these new alignments—in the sense of the division of state-level authority among multiple parties—require new modes of federal prudence is a problem which is rarely clarified in the media. To make matters worse, the insatiable appetite of some Janata leaders for headlines has frequently led observers to conclude that a few cases of publicly displayed disunity necessarily means a general lack of coherence in governmental performance.

The record of governmental performance during the first two years of the Janata phase of Indian politics must be analysed at three levels: the role of the Janata Party at the central and state levels; the co-operation of the Janata Party and its allies; and the general conduct of the federal governmental system under the dominance of the Janata system. While assessing this record we can use the criteria of the electoral mandate, the criteria implied in Janata promises, or the criteria used for academic comparison of political performance. The first two options may be classified as internal criteria and the third, external. The terms of the mandate, as we have discussed earlier, may be summarized in two parts: restoration of constitutional democracy and the provision of better government. The election manifesto of the Janata Party elaborates these basic tasks into a fairly detailed set of policy areas that would be guided by what it calls the political, social, and economic charters.

With the exception of the items in the political charter, the other items are in the nature of long-term goals and thus not very useful

for assessing a performance record of barely two years, particularly since the second year is hard to evaluate because of the problems of access to evidence. For the same reason, any extensive use of the criteria of comparative politics will be inappropriate.[5] Perhaps, the simplest way to assess the record would be to consider the gains and losses of the Indian public during the Janata phase compared to the accumulated experience of three decades under institutionalized Congress rule. Though the limited nature of this relative political assessment should be obvious, it will nevertheless allow us to raise some wider issues of social assessment in appropriate places with the recognition that those issues deserve a separate treatment in their own right.

A rapid reversal of the Emergency regime, the reinstitution of the rule of law and the swift dismantling of the structures of authoritarian control established by the Congress party were probably the most impressive accomplishments of the Janata Party and its allies. Common cause on this front helped create a working system of co-operation internally among the Janata legislators and those of other parties aligned against the Emergency regime. In the course of the passage of the 43rd Amendment Bill and the working of the Shah, Reddy, and Gupta Commissions, it became apparent that most political groups and parties were determined to work together to assure themselves and the public that a recurrence of the Emergency pattern would be more difficult in the future. This awareness of a common stake in the new regime apparently also served it well in spheres of action unrelated to Emergency reversal. During this period, and later, it became increasingly clear that, despite internal organizational weakness, the Janata Party securely maintained working control of the federal system, the civil bureaucracy, and the armed forces. Gradually, it consolidated its strength in a majority of states and helped elect a president of its own choice. However, even during the so-called Janata wave of early 1977, it failed to gain the support of the southern states, and its electoral record in that section of the country has not substantially improved subsequently. The South also accounted for some by-election defeats for the party

[5] Analytical problems of comparing political performance are discussed in, for example, Harry Eckstien, *The Evaluation of Political Performance: Problems and Dimensions* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1971), especially, pp. 20–78.

although, overall, the general tally has not been to its disfavour.[6] In terms of regime restoration, support consolidation, and civil order maintenance, the Janata Party and its allies have so far demonstrated that they can offer an alternative democratic government that works.

Few observers had expected the Janata Party to perform well in the sphere of foreign relations. When a Jana Sangh leader was chosen as external affairs minister, misgivings were expressed regarding future relations with Muslim neighbours and other states. However, the first two years of Janata foreign policy were associated with continuous friendly relations, not merely with both proximate and distant Muslim states but also with all of India's smaller neighbours. The Indo-Pakistan agreement on the Salal plant and mutual trade and cultural transactions in this period can be reckoned as products of an effective and pragmatic policy unhindered by inherited sentiments. Relations with the United States improved without creating an adverse effect on Indo-Soviet relations. Trade and credit transactions increased with Vietnam, while at the same time trade was resumed with China. The war between China and Vietnam may create unexpected complications, but the external affairs minister appears to be persuaded after his visit to Peking that the improvement in Sino-Indian relations need not be reversed. It is difficult to discern any earlier period when India's foreign relations displayed such positive signs. Probably, the basic premise of the Janata foreign policy is built on the conviction that attention to internal matters is more urgent and sensible for a country endowed with India's problems.

Attending to the internal problems in terms of the developmental needs of the largest number of the population should be the most important challenge confronting any ruling party in India. How have the Janata Party and the extended organizational system fared in responding to this challenge? In order to answer this question, we should initially examine how the party perceived the

[6] In February 1979, the Janata Party won the Khandwa Lok Sabha and the Champa State Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh against the combined strength of the Congress and the Congress-I parties. The Khandwa election is particularly interesting because Adivasis, Harijans, and Muslims—groups which are alleged to be increasingly wary of the Janata system—constitute close to 45 per cent of the electorate in that constituency. For details, see the *The Statesman Weekly*, 10 and 17 February 1979, pp. 1 and 9 respectively.

nature of this challenge, how it proceeded to formulate its major responses, and who were the beneficiaries.

Major statements of development policy emerging from the new ruling party, its ministers, and planning organizations have all given a consistent recognition to the urgency of poverty problems among the rural majority. While the recognition of a poverty problem in India is neither new nor unexpected, it is possible to detect a change in emphasis and in the inferences drawn from it. The economic charter of the Janata Party is based on a time-bound goal of ending destitution within a decade. It seeks to elaborate what it calls a Gandhian alternative path of decentralized development with an emphasis on immediate employment generation for the rural poor.[7] The draft Sixth Five Year Plan (1978–83) differs significantly from its predecessor. Unlike the Fifth Plan, the new plan draft insists on giving primacy to a measurable increase in the welfare of the poor in a specified time schedule. The principal objectives are clearly defined in terms of employment, poverty-reduction, and direct provision by the state to meet selected basic need of the poor.[8] There is less obsession with national product increment, capital-intensive investment, and public sector centralization in most policy planning documents issued by the new authorities from those in the previous plans. Rural development—in the sense of improving human and material resources rather than an exclusive emphasis on agricultural production—has been given a prominence that was largely absent in the previous plan. Accordingly, more than 43 per cent of the total public sector plan outlay has been earmarked for rural development. It is interesting that the most prominent rural interest groups within the Janata Party have regarded this unprecedented allocation as inadequate (see Table 11.1).

Plan allocations, however, so often remain paper allocations. But the process of planning followed by the Janata government indicates a greater seriousness of intent than, for example, that of its Emergency predecessor. While the current draft plan, prepared by newly appointed members, needed barely six months for preparation, its predecessor had required more than two and a half

[7] See *Election Manifesto, 1977*, Janata Party, especially p. 10ff.

[8] *Draft Five Year Plan 1978–83*, Government of India, Planning Commission, 1978, pp. 3–4.

TABLE 11.1: Public Sector Outlays in Five Year Plans: New Draft Plan, 1978–83, and the Fifth Plan, 1974–9

In crores of rupees (1 crore = 10 million)

Sector	1 Fifth Plan	2 Plan 1978–83	3 % increase in col. 2 over 1[b]
1. Agriculture and Rural Development[a]	4302	8600	99.9 (99.5)
2. Irrigation and Flood Control	4226	9650	128.3 (123.3)
3. Industry and Minerals	7362	10,350	40.6 (40.6)
4. Energy, Science, and Technology	10,219	20,800	103.5 (102.1)
5. Transport and Communication	6917	10,562	52.7 (53.6)
6. Social Services including Health, Education, and Welfare	6224	9355	50.3 (30.1)
Total	39,322	69,380	76.4

Rural outlay including agriculture, rural development, and minor irrigation as a per cent of plan outlay, 1978–83: 43.1.

Source: *Draft Five Year Plan*, 1978–83, pp. 17–18.
Note: One US dollar currently equals 8 rupees.
[a] Excludes Minor Irrigation.
[b] Figures in parenthesis are those reported in the original source.

years. The Fifth Plan was supposed to cover the period 1974–79, but it was placed before the National Development Council (NDC) in 1976. The current draft plan for 1978–83 was placed before the NDC by March 1978. Since the NDC is a federal body where the representatives of the Centre and the states jointly exercise the responsibility of approving plan allocations, given the new alignments of party control of states, uni-party control of the type exercised during the previous regime was out of question. Janata leaders at the Centre were thus faced with an entirely different problem in the politics of planning than their predecessors.[9] On the one hand they had to negotiate skillfully with state leaders of various political affiliations, just as on the other hand

[9] See *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 March 1978, pp. 542–3.

they could not take for granted the approval of Janata state leaders because of the low internal integration of their own party organization. Though this meeting approved the basic principles of allocation contained in the new draft, it sensitized the central leadership to the need for a new federal political prudence that alone can make planning under the Janata system realistic.

Commitment to decentralized development as spelled out in the Janata promises thus may get a more serious trial in the new politics of Indian planning even if some party leaders want to move slowly on this. Regional loyalty is not the only problem which has demanded a new mode of political coordination as a precondition of realism in developmental planning. Ideological division among the units to be coordinated has posted another dimension of the problem, not the least because the regional base of an ideological state leadership may produce a convenient combination of regional interest and ideological affinity. One important change in the distribution of federal resources can be witnessed in the fact that the annual plans of the states and Union Territories for 1978–9 taken together will be bigger than that of the federal government.[10] As the Janata planners have allocated larger resources for rural development, including agriculture and irrigation, they have also facilitated a stronger decentralization of real economic power to the states. Those who strongly value central ascendance as a condition of national development may find this disturbing. However, the Janata leadership has consistently encouraged decentralization, probably because they believe that it promises a more self-reliant rural development and that the success of the Janata system requires a co-operative balance of resources.

Decentralized planning, however, involves more than the centre–state balancing of resources and power. It also calls attention to the problems of organizational planning for the best utilization of developmental initiative and resources at the district, bloc, and village levels. The Janata government realized that previous planning exercises had grossly neglected the problem of the organizational requisites of rural development. So often, criticism of implementation overlooked the possibility that in a developing country mere financial planning unaccompanied by organizational

[10] See *Economic, New Gains and Priorities*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, December 1978, p. 10.

development may be an effective way of assuring programme or project failure. One way that the new plan has sought to attend to these problems is to direct attention to the need for devolving the responsibility of local planning and organization to lower levels appropriate to rural development. More detailed treatment of these problems was assigned to expert commissions, and their reports were published in 1978.[11] The report on bloc level planning prepared by the Dantwala team and the report on revitalizing Panchayati Raj institutions have offered suggestions for alternative organizational systems that can be appropriate to the strategy of need-oriented rural development. To what extent these and other reports, including one on voluntary organizations, will be used for organizational innovation remains to be seen. Two grounds for hope may be mentioned here. Fairly rapid expansion of area development, integrated rural development, and rural employment projects have already revealed the gross inadequacy of the existing administrative structure at relevant levels. A second factor is that the parties associated with the Janata system can profitably use investment in new structures of development organization as instruments for expanding their authority. Unlike the Congress party, these parties need new bases of rural control and support to expand their own power base, if not necessarily to serve the rural poor.

Policy Products

Fortunately for the Janata Party, its pursuit of the rural strategy of development has been associated with encouraging results in certain major respects.[12] The *Economic Survey* placed before Parliament in 1979 indicates that the average annual national income growth during the last two years has been approximately 5 per cent.

[11] The reference is to *the Report of the Working Group on Block Level Planning*, 1978, chaired by M. L. Dantwala and the report of the Asoka Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj institutions, presented in 1978.

[12] The evidence presented in this section is from a number of sources, some of which are for restricted circulation. Among the Government of India sources are the *The Economic Survey, 1978–89*; *Draft Five Year Plan; Economy, New Gains and Priorities, 1978; India News*, 29 January 1979; and *Indiagram*, 6 March 1979. The newspapers used for this period are *The Statesman*, *The Times of India*, and *The Statesman Weekly*.

The record of food production during the same period has been good enough to provide a surplus of 20 million tons of foodgrains in 1979, despite the widespread disruption of agriculture because of the devastating floods in 1978 that affected a large number of states. Enlarged investment in input supply has, apparently, significantly reduced uncertainties in agricultural output. It is worth noting that serious attention has been given to bringing a record 17 million hectares under irrigation in the new plan. A policy of accelerated implementation of integrated rural development at the block level has been taken, which, according to the prime minister's report submitted in January 1979, will help achieve near full employment in 1300 blocks by March 1981. Reports on the employment front for the last year, whether rural or urban, have not been as encouraging as the government may have anticipated. It is here that the organizational weakness of Indian planning inherited by the Janata Party probably shows at its worst. The big food surplus has kept on accumulating when a good part of it could be utilized for employment creation. On a relatively small scale, the Food for Work programme has been expanding in most states, including an enthusiastic pursuit of this programme under the Communist Party (Marxist) government in West Bengal. Nationally, the programme is expected to generate additional employment of 400 million man days during 1978–9.

The record of industrial development has been comparatively poorer than agriculture. Due to the rural emphasis of the new strategy and a clear opposition to capital-intensive industries, observers had expected a relative shortfall of performance in this sphere. However, during the first eight months of 1978, industries recorded a growth of 8 per cent, nearly double that of the previous year. The government's New Industrial Policy, which supersedes the Congress party's 1956 Resolution, has sought to redirect emphasis away from heavy industries to rural development and smaller-scale industries. It prescribes wider dispersal of productive activities. As a measure of effective promotion of small-scale industries in small towns and rural areas, it has followed a principle of reservation under which a long list of items have been placed within the exclusive domain of small-scale manufacture. However, the regulatory impulse that has guided the new policy has not yet been effectively supported by the material and organizational preparation without which the new incentives are likely to be wasted.

While one can understand the need for a consistent relationship between industrial and rural development policies compatible with the new developmental strategy, it is not readily apparent that indiscriminate incentive to small-scale enterprise will serve the desired purpose. To be sure, the new policy does not imply what some people have called a policy of 'deindustrialization' in India. Rural development itself will require extensive use of the products of large-scale industries—fertilizers, steel machinery for electrification, insecticides, etc.—and the new plan has made adequate provision for ensuring a balanced supply of such necessities. Traditionally, Indian planning has provided for elaborate subsidies to producers and exporters of industrial products. By 1979, the Janata leaders had addressed even more attention to export promotion. To this end regulatory policies have been relaxed. Probably, the net effect of the new policy in practice will be to remain more pragmatic and prepared for shifting adjustments than before, rather than tied to a one-track devotion to an ideology of small-scale production.

The general price level over the year ending in October 1978 registered a modest increase of 1.8 per cent. Generally, the Janata system has been served well by the maintenance of price stability in spite of budget deficits. Despite some recent setbacks in foreign trade and payments, the foreign exchange reserves increased by $1818.88 million in 1977–8, and the current reserve stands at $5347.77 million—largely because of remittances accruing to India from overseas sources.

Policy Prospects

In short, the general economic performance and concerted plan and budgetary measures to improve these performance to serve a clearly articulated strategy indicate that the Janata system is capable of directing the policy system. In addition, compared to its more integrated predecessor, it has offered a design of development which is relatively more responsive to the rural population. Though the capacity of the specific measures adopted by the new government actually to reduce rural destitution is still to be seen, their intent and endeavour remain more clearly oriented towards the desired objective than any previous government in India.

Surprisingly, for a party of weak cohesion, the Janata leaders' use of the national governmental apparatus has not been ineffective. The rural shift has been reflected in the 1979–80 budget presented by the new finance minister, Charan Singh. Rural welfare programmes have acquired a relatively greater vitality than in previous plan periods. When one examines a simple and rather modest programme like the rural health care programme, one wonders what had prevented even this much service to the rural poor in the three decades of 'sophisticated' planning. At the state level, however, weak party control has cost the party dearly. What is worse, the weakness of the hierarchic control system has allowed some states to remain indifferent to cases of social oppression or communal violence. Another aspect of this weak control system poses a grave danger to its plans for rural development. So far, it has not found a way to get the states to expedite rural asset distribution, including land reform. To say that its more organized and institutionalized predecessor had failed to accomplish it in several decades is no consolation. Weakness, however, may lead to a productive openness. Some leaders of the Janata Party have publicly admired the registration system for crop-sharers enforced by the CPM West Bengal government. They are willing to learn from the land reform and rural welfare systems in the non-Janata Kerala and Karnataka governments. Weak discipline in the ruling party at the Centre probably makes inter-party learning easier. Similarly, the combination of the elements of newness and weakness may allow the component leaders of the party to make adventurous bids for rural mass support for strategic advantage within the national party. The constraints of class background of the leaders need not always overpower the logic of competitive support.

However, competitive bidding for rural support does not necessarily imply that the poorer supporters can expect to gain relatively more than their richer counterparts in the rural areas. Collective rural gain compared to the urban segment of the nation may not benefit the rural poor unless the attention of public policy and political organizations is specifically directed to this end. If the 1979–80 budget proposals are indicative of the current direction, the Janata leaders are still tied to their collective rural objectives compared to the relative share of the rural poor. Increased subsidization of the rural segment of the economy, so reflected in

the budget proposals, is unlikely to have beneficial effects either on government finance or on the rural poor, particularly when enlarged deficits have been sought to be covered by revenues from indirect sources.[13] These subsidies may serve the immediate need for enlarging the sphere of influence of the component leaders, but their long range general effects may not be consistent either with the interests of the Janata system as a whole or with the interests of the rural poor.[14]

The Janata phase of Indian politics offers an interesting period of exploration of innovative directions within the context of social structural continuity. We have attempted to analyse some selected positive possibilities emerging from this phase, remembering at the same time that the success of the new directions will require structural reforms which the weak organization of the Janata Party and the limited capacity of the Janata system may find increasingly difficult to implement. However, if the Janata system has demonstrated the value of a long overdue rural shift, it will stand out in Indian political history as a catalyst of structural change whether or not the party endures for long. We have deliberately concentrated on its positive contribution in demonstrating the feasibility of party alternation, egalitarian federalism, and rural redirection of the politics of development because the obvious weaknesses of the Janata system so often tend to conceal the significance of the new beginnings. An academic reiteration of the obvious weaknesses of a new political formation or the use of ideal standards to suggest politically unrealistic alternatives beyond the means of the exist-ing organizational capacity of real political forces at the

[13] The proposals for subsidies for 1979–80 are as follows, with the corresponding figures for the previous year given in parentheses: Rs 570 crores on food (Rs 560 crores): Rs 448 crores on fertilizer (Rs 290 crores); and Rs 381 crores on export assistance (Rs 315 crores). The 1978–9 budget had anticipated a deficit of Rs 1071 crores, but the revised estimates indicated one of Rs 2145 crores. The 1979–80 budget proposals anticipate a deficit of Rs 1355 crores. Of the additional taxation proposed in the new budget, about 90 per cent is supposed to come from indirect taxes. See *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3 March 1979 and *The Statesman Weekly*, 10 March 1979.

[14] The union finance minister, Charan Singh, has claimed that the net effect of the new budget will be to help small farmers rather than big land holders. His critics, on the other hand, have chosen to describe his proposals as a 'Kulak budget'. For examples of this debate, see *The Statesman Weekly*, 10 March 1979.

present moment of Indian history will not serve any useful purpose outside of parlour amusement. What the Janata system or even the Janata Party has accomplished during the brief span of two years was not self-evident when it assumed the joint responsibility of democratic restoration and developmental reconstruction for a country with a large poor population that, however, cherishes and loves to uphold the world's most complex structure of social and political divisions. In order to analyse realistically what alternatives should be explored, we can profit from patiently understanding the problems and difficulties of the new directions that are now being tried.

12

Representation and Redistribution: The New Lower Caste Politics of North India[+]

ZOYA HASAN

A complex scenario is unfolding in India: the state is in retreat, institutions are in decline, caste and communitarian assertions have grown, and political instability has increased. The 1998 election was the twelfth since 1952, but fourth since the last decade—a sign of the fragmented state of the polity. At the same time, there is evidence of the vitality of Indian democracy: throughout the 1990s, turnouts for elections to Parliament and state assemblies have risen steadily and significantly. The data collected by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in Delhi make it clear that the steadiest increases in participation have come from those in the lower social order, from the poor and illiterate. This process has been aided by the regionalization of the polity, the emergence of a coalition of regional groups/parties, and the entry of hitherto marginalized groups into the political system.

Still there remains a central contradiction at the heart of Indian democracy: an inclusive polity has so far not made for a more just and equal society. What, then, is the meaning and significance of greater political participation? What is the relationship between democracy and social and economic equality? What are

[+] This is a slightly edited version of the original article which appeared in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava and Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

the consequences of appealing to the electorate in ethnic or group terms, or making group demands on the state? Do political parties merely mirror divisions, or do they help to deepen and extend them?

In 1949, B. R. Ambedkar noted an incongruity between political equality and social and economic inequalities that would effectively exclude sections of the population from the democratic process. He stated in the Constituent Assembly:

> On the 26th of January, we are going to enter a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.[1]

Fifty years later, the contradiction persists. In fact, it has come to the fore in the last two decades of competitive politics. Seen from the vantage point of the 1998 elections, democratic politics is distinguished by a fundamental transformation: a dramatic upsurge in political participation in north India. That, of course, is not the whole story: the upsurge is most marked among the socially underprivileged in the caste and class hierarchy. Moreover, the downward thrust of participation is entwined with struggles of groups who have been mobilized under banners of ethnicity, caste, and religion. In these processes, group identity has supplanted class interest as the chief vehicle of political mobilization; hence, the increasing dependence of all major political parties on ethnic appeals. Ethnic strategies of political mobilization have drawn new groups into the political arena; yet, these struggles occur in a world of great material inequality—staggering inequalities in income and property ownership, in access to employment, education, and health care. In fact, material inequality is on the rise in India and the socially privileged remain economically powerful.

This paper focuses on the relation between the two transformations: the upsurge in participation of hitherto marginal groups and the increasing dependence of political parties on ethnic appeals to

[1] *Constituent Assembly Debates*, vol. X, Official Report (New Delhi, 1989), p. 979.

facilitate participation. Opening up the institutional space to greater participation by marginal groups is vital; equally crucial however, is how this can be achieved and the terms on which it is taking place. In part, this means looking at the relationship between the 'struggle for recognition' of marginal groups, and social and economic equality. In addressing this problematic, I shall focus on axes of injustice that are simultaneously cultural and socio-economic, and paradigmatically, caste and class. In what follows, I consider only one aspect of the problem. Under what circumstances can the 'politics of recognition' foster participation and empowerment? Can such politics help promote redistribution? And when is it likely to undermine it?

These questions are addressed through an examination of the career of a lower caste political party, notably the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and is based on secondary sources and interviews with political leaders in Uttar Pradesh (UP), India's largest state. The BSP has made rapid progress on the electoral front. During the 1989 general election it received 2.07 per cent of the votes and obtained three seats in the Lok Sabha. By 1996, its growth enabled the party to obtain the status of a national party, winning 20 per cent of the vote and five seats. How and why has the BSP's mobilization strategy succeeded in attracting voters? And how successful has it been in achieving its goals from the standpoint of equality?

Why UP? For one thing, this mega-state of 140 million people, located in the northern Hindi heartland, is one of the most backward in India. It is also one of the most deprived economically, giving its citizens less than some of the worst performing economies in sub-Saharan Africa. However, it sends eighty-five members to the Lok Sabha, out of a total of 545. This makes it politically the most crucial region in terms of determining the formation of the central government in New Delhi. It is also the chief locale for the transition to a post-Congress polity, and is the pivotal site of contestation between non-Congress-groups. Inter-caste conflict, assertive lower castes, and Hindutva politics all manifest themselves in UP. Potentially, the most radical challenge to upper caste hegemony, the outcome of which would affect the overall structure of social inequality, is taking place in UP. The way in which conflicts between castes and communities are played out in UP will influence the course of democratic politics in north India

and alter the ways of wresting and sustaining political power at the national level.

I

The impetus for political transformation originated in the rapid realignments that began to take place in the late 1980s. The state was controlled by the Congress party until 1989, with its social base drawn from the Brahmins, the Muslims, and the Scheduled Castes. Operating as a centrist party, Congress attracted the support of a wide range of groups. As elsewhere, the centrepiece of its hegemony was a strategy that vertically aggregated the interests of different sections of society. It was an aggregation based on an inclusive ideological package of nationalism, secularism, and Nehruvian socialism. Congress succeeded in retaining its hold because it deftly persuaded the lower orders to believe that the existing political arrangements worked in their interest. It was quite a while before the Congress was challenged by the counter-hegemonies created by new social forces.

The main social conflict in UP, apparent since 1977, has been between the upper castes, represented by the Congress, and backward castes, backed by the socialists who had been a major political force in UP from the days of the anti-colonial struggle. Eventually, the backward castes were mobilized under the aegis of the Janata Dal formed in 1989 by V. P. Singh (who had left the Congress in 1988 to establish his own party), and included some of the older socialists. Dedicated to moral probity and social justice, he promised the backward castes reservations in education and government service. During the brief period from 1989 to 1990, the Janata Dal-led government in New Delhi carved out a distinctive ideology based on the dual demands of the rural majority. One was for greater opportunities through investment in agricultural infrastructure and employment, and the other for higher social status through quotas for lower castes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in recruitment to the élite all-India services. Ironically, the Janata Dal itself was the major victim of its political mobilization strategy. Subsequently, state and local leaders of the backward classes and dalits rejected the mediation of national parties such as the Janata Dal, even though it was essentially a party of OBCs. Instead, they attempted to enhance their access to public resources

of the state through direct participation in the bargaining process that preceded the formation of governments at both the central and state levels.

The political pattern that emerged in the early 1990s demonstrated that the Hindu nationalists rather than the Janata Dal or its successor, the Samajwadi Party, had displaced the Congress as the dominant party. The growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which had not won even a quarter of the votes or seats in the UP Assembly before 1991, was an extraordinary development. It changed the dynamics of electoral competition and facilitated the emergence of the BJP as a national contender to the Congress. The decisive electoral battles of this period were fought in UP, where Congress fortunes declined dramatically. The most significant factor responsible for its electoral defeat was the party's inability to retain its traditional support base that had cut across caste, class, and community lines. Furthermore, Congress' actions regarding Ayodhya, the disputed site of the Babri masjid, claimed by Hindus as the birthplace of Lord Ram, alienated devout voters among both Hindus and Muslims, accelerating the party's decline.

In 1986, a dispute about the status of the Babri masjid, built centuries earlier by Babar on or near an ancient site sacred to Hindus, took an unexpected political turn. The district judge, presumably on instructions from Congress authorities at the Centre, allowed the padlock to be removed to allow Hindus to worship at the site. An unprecedented Ram Janmabhoomi movement organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an organization affiliated to the BJP, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) demanded the building of a new Ram mandir at the site of the mosque. The Congress, in November 1989, allowed the foundation-laying ceremony of the Ram mandir to take place on the disputed site. Although it later prohibited the construction of the mandir, pending a court decision on the rights of each community to the area, the foundation-laying ceremony emboldened militant Hindus associated with the BJP. This helped the VHP–RSS to start a popular movement which significantly changed India's political agenda. Designed to reverse the dwindling appeal of the Congress by buttressing the 'Hindu' vote, the leadership's permissiveness in allowing the foundation-laying ceremony, while holding the line against building the temple, alarmed Muslims and disappointed Hindus, ironically contributing to the party's downfall.

At the national level, the political ground shifted in 1990 when the central government adopted the recommendations of the Mandal Commission to establish reservations. The initiative, motivated by V. P. Singh's effort to strengthen the Janata Dal's influence on the backward castes, intensified divisions among Hindus. This confrontation spurred the BJP to support the movement led by the VHP, and aimed at reintegrating lower castes into the Hindu hierarchy through a religious appeal to all Hindus to demolish the Babri masjid and replace it with a Ram mandir.

In UP, the BJP combine provoked stiff resistance from the Samajwadi Party led by Mulayam Singh Yadav, UP Chief Minister from 1989 to 1991. Mulayam Singh was busy consolidating his own power base by extending reservations for the backward castes in state educational institutions and administrative services. Once the new reservation policy was set in motion, the upper castes reacted violently. The conflict between the Mulayam Singh government and the upper castes in 1990 spilled into communal conflagration that engulfed UP from October 1990 to March 1991. The disaffected upper castes, who had traditionally voted the Congress, transferred their support to the BJP. They resented the rise of backward-caste parties and leaders in the state, and patronage extended by the central Congress leadership in New Delhi to Mulayam Singh. He maintained his hold on UP, even after the minority Janata Dal-led National Front government collapsed at the Centre, once the BJP with drew its support in the wake of the Mandal–Mandir controversy. The conflict between Mulayam Singh's government and the upper castes became the most enduring confrontation in UP's contemporary political history.

Political leaders and party strategies played the determining role in instigating caste and communal crusades. And in supporting political mobilization around issues of caste discrimination, social recognition, and religious identity. But the two mobilization strategies in question, caste and community, are quite different in the outcomes they produce, even though both speak to particularistic interests. By polarizing castes into blocs and demanding representation on a bloc basis, the politics of caste identity disrupts the traditional definitions of caste-based hierarchy in Hindu society. Using political rather than religious criteria, caste-based political mobilization converges on control of the state. Such strategies of caste polarization can destabilize the political system, but appear

necessary to achieve justice for lower caste groups. In other words, what may be seen as destabilizing political process from one perspective, can be seen as deepening democracy by those groups who capture state power for the first time. By contract, the politics of communalism practised by the BJP attempts to unify all Hindus within a traditional and hierarchical social order. The BJP is not known for its commitment to justice or democracy. The very concept of pluralism which is at the heart of India's democracy is challenged by its project to privilege a singular, majoritarian identity.

II

Although the OBCs and Scheduled Castes constitute more than half its population, and just over 20 per cent of UP's population belong to upper castes, it is this 20 per cent that has dominated UP society and politics. In recent decades, however, the entry of OBCs into the political system has made a profound difference. Even more important than the rise of Hindu nationalism for the transformation of politics in the state, is the growth of backward and lower caste politics. Caste politics, admittedly, are not new. For several decades, inter-caste conflicts have furnished the principal cleavage in electoral mobilization and played a key part in structuring inter-party competition. Caste calculations have affected most aspects of social and political relations in rural and urban UP. They set the terms of political competition for entitlement and status among groups who see themselves as having equal claims to rights and power. The Hindi satirist, Harishankar Parsai, captured this centrality in literary piece. He claimed to have persuaded Lord Krishna to contest for a seat in the state assembly:

> We talked to some people active in politics. They said, 'Of course Why shouldn't you? If you won't run in the election, who will? After all, you are a Yadav, aren't you?' Krishna said, 'I am God. I don't have a caste.' They said, 'Look, sir, being God won't do you any good around here. No one will vote for you. How do you expect to win if you don't maintain your caste?'[2]

What is new is the heightened political awakening among the lower castes and dalits, a process hastened by the fragmentation of the

[2] Harishankar Parsai, *Selected Satire* (Delhi: Manas Publications, 1996).

old Congress coalition into constituent groups of upper castes, Muslims, and dalits. What is also new is the formation of local and regional parties that represent marginal groups hitherto under the Congress umbrella. The structure of representation and power-sharing conceived and practised by the Congress was at odds with the way the new groupings wanted to represent themselves. The drift has unmistakably been towards seeking direct control over the state by hitherto excluded groups.

Among these disadvantaged groups, the Scheduled Castes constitute more than 20 per cent of the population of UP. After Independence, policy measures for their uplift were designed to moderate the harshness of the caste system. Reservation for them in elected legislatures and in recruitment to educational institutions and government services, as set out in the Constitution, were justified on grounds of the extreme social discrimination they had suffered for centuries, resulting in educational and economic backwardness. Most remained poor and illiterate either casual or landless labour. Despite reservations in 1991, only 22.92 per cent of Scheduled Castes were literate. Their level of urbanization was 11.80 per cent compared to 22 per cent for others. As many as 81.59 per cent were engaged in the agricultural sector, as against 69.42 per cent for others; and only 18.59 per cent were employed in non-agricultural occupations, while for others the proportion was 30.58 per cent. Although the disparity between groups in literacy had narrowed since 1971, as of the early 1990s only 14.43 per cent of Scheduled Castes population had received any kind of formal education.[3] Again, while blatant forms of caste discrimination have disappeared, more subtle forms remain widespread especially in rural areas.[4] Compared to their upper caste peers, Scheduled Caste legislators seemed to have very little influence over the day to day implementation of public policies, underlining the real constraints on political empowerment. They could not bring about a substantial change in the distribution of

[3] *Primary Census Abstract for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, Paper 1, 1993.

[4] For example, in Palanpur female literacy varies from zero for Scheduled Caste females to 100 per cent for Kayasths. Jean Drèze and Haris Gazdar, 'Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia', in Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (eds), *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 83–6.

agrarian assets, the most important determinant of the material condition of the rural population.[5]

In theory, zamindari abolition and land reforms should have empowered the dalit community in UP. However, it is widely accepted that these reforms, which were only partially successful, merely undermined the power of the upper caste landlords. The wider benefits of reform reached out to the erstwhile tenants or the intermediate and backward castes, not to the untouchable communities or agricultural labourers and agrestic serfs.[6] In fact, the growing power of the backward castes in the wake of the Green Revolution obliged the states in north India, most notably UP, to initiate the Mandal Commission reforms. These translated the increasing political and economic influence of the backward castes into bureaucratic power.

Despite the limitations of land reforms, the logic of extending the franchise to all adults and allowing democratic politics, finally created a social milieu in the 1990s in which dalit voters at last confronted the dominance of the upper and backward castes. Aware of the logic of democratic politics in which a majority is won on the basis of the first-past-the-post-system, the numerical strength of lower caste groups gives them an advantage. It is important to note that dalit voters had already been mobilized by the democratic upsurge of the 1970s: the odds of the dalits turning out to vote became as high as those of the upper castes. Since then, the odds of dalit voter turnout is 70 per cent higher than that of the upper castes.[7] This encouraged dalit leaders to launch their own platforms. According to social anthropologist, R. S. Khare, the impact of the democratic culture is unmistakable when a dalit, 'who customarily has a non-competitive subjugated status', discovers through experience, especially of other groups, that competition is one of the

[5] Barbara Joshi, 'Whose Law, Whose Order? 'Untouchables'. Social Violence and the State in India', *Asian Survey*, no. 7, July 1982, p. 684.

[6] For a discussion of the impact of land reforms on different groups, see my *Quest for Power: Oppositional Movements in Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), Chapter 2.

[7] For details of the democratic upsurge, see Yogendra Yadav, 'Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge: trends of Bahujan Participation in Electoral Politics in the 1990s', in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava and Balveer Arora (eds) *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

major mechanisms of social re-cuperation.[8] To compete is to claim a political right.

In the forefront of dalit politics are the new professional and administrative elites, a group that is still very small but quite aware of its prestigious social placement. Politically conscious, better educated, and assertive towards the hierarchy of caste and class, members of this group have contributed to strengthening the processes of socio-political change. The striking feature of this agenda is the belief that real improvement in their lives can only come through a discourse that focuses on political power and organization as the key to their social advancement. The logic of dalit politics, they argue, involves three major themes: a challenge to the very definition of Hinduism as the majority religion and the core of Indian tradition; an extension of this theme beyond dalits to include all sections of those oppressed and marginalized by the process of caste exploitation; and a synthesis of economic and political issues with the need for cultural recognition.[9] At the heart of the matter is whether it is more important to change state policy outcomes, or the processes that produce them. The strategy of dalit assertion clearly indicates it is more important to acquire power as a means of changing state outcomes, than to change structures that produce them.

Given the dual inequalities of status and income/occupation built into the caste system, the dominant tendency among dalit leaders has favoured a change in the power structure, so that opportunities could be channelled to the deprived sections of society. The OBC-dominated Janata Dal, led by Laloo Prasad Yadav in neighbouring Bihar, came to power on such a platform: 'smash the upper castes, destroy the Bhura-bal'. An example of his rhetoric is the following:

> Just as peddlers visit your villages saying, choose what you like for four annas, the officers of my government will come to you with whatever you want. Free sarees, free dhotis. They will camp in your villages. They are your servants. Take what you want.

[8] R. S. Khare, *The Untouchable as Himself: Ideology, Identity and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 129.

[9] Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Visions: Tracts for the Times 8* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1995), p. 87.

The centrality accorded to power was just as clear in the remarks of the former prime minister, V. P. Singh, the chief architect of the social justice platform:

> Through Mandal I knew we were going to bring in changes in the basic nature of power. I was putting my hand on the real structure of power. I knew I was not giving jobs, Mandal is not an employment scheme, but I was seeking to place people in the instrument of power through the use of governmental power.[10]

The most remarkable characteristic of lower caste politics is the pursuit of power. Like the OBC leaders the dalit leaders are preoccupied with the question of who governs and how the new political order should be established and maintained. Both attach great importance to gaining government positions, and measure social and economic progress by their groups' share in public life: education, professions, and public employment. Kanshi Ram, the pioneer of the movement to politically organize the *bahujan samaj* (which simply means the non-upper caste majority, Muslims included), puts the matter bluntly: 'we have a one point programme—take power.'[11] The BSP's principal slogans underscore this thrust: *mat hamara raj tumhara, nahi chalega nahi chalega or, vote se lenge PM/CM, arakshan se SP/DM.*[12] By contrast, in the 1970s, Kanshi Ram's activities were focused on welfare and reform. By the late 1970s his strategy had changed and he no longer believed in the primacy of social reform; rather it is a share in political and administrative power which will bring about the desired social change.[13]

[10] Quoted in Seema Mustafa's biography of V. P. Singh. *The Lonely Prophet: A Political Biography of V. P. Singh* (Delhi: Wiley Eastern, 1996), p. 191.

[11] The Bahujan Samaj Party's most popular slogan is: *Brahmin, bania, thakur chor, Baki sab DS4*' (Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti). It has gone much beyond other dalit organizations by projecting itself not as a 'dalit party' but as a bahujan party of dalits, non-Brahmins, and minorities. See Gail Omvedt, 'The Anti-Caste Movement and the Discourse of Power', in T. V. Sathyamurthy (ed.), *Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 344–6.

[12] Translation: 'We vote you rule, this cannot go on. Through the vote we will take the posts of prime minister and chief minister; through reservations we will take the posts of district magistrate and superintendent police.'

[13] Oliver Mendelsohn and Marica Vicziani, *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 223.

Opposed to this argument stand the not so desirable structures of social dominance within north Indian society that traditionally compelled dalits to vote in accordance with the wishes of upper caste landlords. Ambedkarite in ideological inspiration, the new leadership wants to turn this structure upside down and construct, instead, a new political order based on the active participation of hitherto deprived groups in government and public administration. Through controlling power, they hope to ensure that members of lower castes secure jobs and places in educational institutions. Although reservations have secured some upward mobility, dalits have a major grievance that the reservation quota is seldom filled. In the early 1980s, only 5.8 per cent of Class I officials, and 6.23 per cent Class II officials were Scheduled Castes, although 18 per cent positions were reserved for them. Even when the quota was filled, the Scheduled Castes complained of social discrimination in promotions and postings. Hence the dalit upsurge was stirred principally by the upwardly mobile middle strata among the Scheduled Castes, who were powerless to secure important postings and proper recognition in government and society. The origins and support of the party among educated government employees is crucial for understanding both the institutional nature of its strategy and its success, a success that was limited to elite incorporation into state institutions.

III

A development of critical importance in UP has been the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party which was able to form the government in 1995 and 1997. The BSP benefited crucially from the collapse of the Congress in UP. Its rise to prominence was partly due to the vacuum caused by the decline of the Congress, partly because of its own appeal, and also because the Congress discouraged highly assertive advocates of the oppressed castes and classes within its ranks. More importantly, the disintegration of Congress rule transformed the manner in which ethnic identities were catapulted onto the political arena. The waning of the Congress coincided with an escalation of direct caste–community appeals made by non-Congress parties, which led to an exodus of groups that were under the Congress umbrella towards the Samajwadi Party and the BSP. These two parties picked up additional support as they gathered momentum.

A crucial step in this direction was the formation in 1978 of an organization called the Backward and Minority Classes Employees Federation (BAMCEF) by Kanshi Ram. Established in Punjab, it was later extended to UP. Its chief aim was to organize the elite of the bahujan samaj who had benefited from quotas in government services. They became the chief ideologues and workers of the organization that eventually became the Bahujan Samaj Party. By the early 1990s, BAMCEF had almost 200,000 members.[14] It mobilized government officers on the assumption that their further individual progress was closely linked to the collective standing of their group.[15] It prepared the ground for the formation of the BSP in 1984; its goal was to create a coalition of minorities that actually constituted a majority: the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, Muslims Christians, and Sikhs, that is, all those included in the Hindu upper castes. Unable to establish itself as a party of all the minorities, the predominant base of the BSP came from the politicized dalits who were receptive to its radical message of political empowerment. Today, its core support comes from those castes who have been the main beneficiaries of the state's reservation policies. The nucleus of its support comes from the Chamar caste, by far the largest and most politicized lower caste in UP Backed by the BSP, dalit assertiveness succeeded in undermining the domination of upper castes and, by the mid-1990s, they were beginning to supplant them in elected government bodies.[16]

[14] Gail Omvedt, 'Kanshi Ram and the Bahujan Samaj Party', in K. L. Sharma (ed.), *Caste and Class in India* (Jaipur: Rawat, 1994), p. 163.

[15] Interviews with dalit IAS officials in August 1997 in Lucknow highlighted this point.

[16] The OBC and dalits comprised 231 MLAs in the 422-member Uttar Pradesh Assembly in 1993. By contrast, Brahmin MLAs declined from 23 per cent in 1980 to 10 per cent in 1993. Their participation expanded with the extension of reservations to the panchayats in 1993 after a rapid census ordered by Mulayam Singh Yadav to estimate the caste-wise configuration. Equally significant is the changing composition of the Cabinet. The percentage of upper castes which according to a study conducted by a member of the Uttar Pradesh Backward Classes Commission, was as high as 64.7 per cent at the time of Chief Minister Sripat Misra, had come down to 50 per cent under Mulayam Singh Yadav in 1990, while non-upper caste representation increased from 35 per cent to 50 per cent. See H. S. Verma, Ram Singh and Jay Singh, 'Power Sharing: Exclusively and Exclusion in a Mega State', Monograph

The ascent of Mayawati to the powerful office of the chief minister of UP in less than a decade of Scheduled Caste mobilization, highlights the success of this strategy in UP. Mayawati, a Yadav woman, became the chief minister in 1995. She is the first dalit woman to have reached the highest office in an Indian state, but gender was not the most important aspect of her accession. Its significance arises from the mobilization strategy of the BSP, centered on dalits themselves. The control of the government by a dalit had a stirring effect on dalits, who felt that they had unexpectedly pulled the ground from beneath the feet of upper castes, so that those at the bottom ruled over those at the top. This event established the dalits as a central political force in their own right and not as a vote bank to be exploited by upper castes.

Before the 1993 assembly elections, Kanshi Ram had entered into a wining alliance with Mulayam Singh. Against the background of the Mandal–Mandir controversies this alliance assumed a new relevance for the Bahujan Samaj's access to power. It helped the BSP and the Samajwadi Party to improve their support in the 1993 elections: the Samajwadi Party won 109 seats out of 425 and 25.83 per cent of the vote, and the BSP won 67 and 11.11 per cent of the vote, and formed the government which lasted nearly two years. But the alliance was dogged by differences over the distribution of benefits. This was by no means a natural alliance, since the two communities were engaged in sometimes violent conflict over land and wages in the villages. The BSP was worried by advances made by the Yadavs under Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's dispensation, while backward castes used every opportunity to tease and torment dalits and also check the latter's efforts towards social mobility. The alliance fell through amidst considerable bickering and bitterness over atrocities towards dalits in May 1995, and the BSP quickly moved on to form a new alliance with the BJP which helped Mayawati to become the chief minister in June 1995. But this alliance was just as expedient as the previous one, its chief purpose being to control Mulayam Singh Yadav, whose increasing political influence both partners wished to

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presented to a panel on Deprivation, Backwardness and Social Transformation of the Backward Classes, Twentieth All-India Sociological Conference, 1993, Mangalore, p. 14.

curb. But, more importantly, it helped the BSP to be in government. Given the overwhelming importance of acquiring power in the BSP scheme, its leadership was willing to enter into an alliance with the BJP or any other party to form a government.

The BSP's approach is fundamentally different from other parties. For it, political society is constituted by groups, and not individuals. It treats group identity as the defining one and does not consider class, gender or occupation as relevant. Hence, its political strategy hinges on activating this identity. Implicit it is a belief that universalist ideas associated with the post-colonial politics of the state were unjust, because they favoured the dominant groups without making adequate allowance for the inequities from which lower castes suffer. Seen invariably in collective terms, disadvantage and inequity are regarded as the unfair treatment of whole caste groups, by the state or others. The new lower caste politics draws upon a growing preference for the recognition of group claims on grounds of social discrimination. This has been used to increase group-based representation in existing political institutions.[17]

In accordance with this strategy, the BSP advocates a one-point programme: proportional representation for all groups in government, bureaucracy, and educational institutions. This system appealed to dalits precisely because it addressed their political aspiration, an aspiration neglected by the Congress. It effectively superseded the welfarist approach of the Congress that stressed material benefits such as jobs, houses, and sanitation for dalits, minorities, and women, but did not offer them a share in power. It treated dalits primarily as an underprivileged group requiring a programme of action to ameliorate poverty. Quite deliberately breaking from this policy, the BSP defined dalits as a 'community of humiliated' who could be liberated only by gaining political power of their 'own', and not just material gains.[18] Under Congress rule, despite the importance of the dalits vote, they achieved very little representation in the government and party organization, and

[17] On this, see Marc Galanter, 'Group Membership and Group Preferences in India', in his *Law and Society in Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 133.

[18] Kanchan Chandra, 'Why does the Bahujan Samaj Party Succeed? A Case Study of the BSP in Hoshiarpur', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Washington DC, March 1998.

the few positions that they did get were due to the benefaction of the upper castes. In a word, the significance of the dalits vote did not translate into perceptible influence for individual members in the organization or government. By contrast, Mayawati's rise to the office of chief minister was the result of the autonomous mobilization of dalits, itself the product of democratic politics, and the politics of reservation, which has made available to them new forms of political self-definition. Dalits, as much as the OBCs, are a category of political action. Political action has been an important means of affirming their political equality vis-à-vis upper castes and a way of regaining self-esteem and self-respect.

Although Mayawati's first stint in power did not entail any structural changes in the economy or polity to benefit the vast numbers of the subaltern classes, the BSP nevertheless commanded crucial support among the dalits throughout its period in office and even thereafter. By the 1996 election it had emerged as an important political force: it notched up an impressive 20 per cent of the vote and managed to get 59 seats in the Vidhan Sabha. This was an improvement of 8 per cent on the 1993 election, a significant development. Significant because it derived not from militant mass mobilization, but from capturing state power via anti-high caste propaganda. An additional reason was Mayawati's distinctive style and culture of administration and her determination to promote Scheduled Caste officers. For example, all the upper castes holding important positions, such as chief secretary and chief minister's private secretary were replace by Scheduled Caste officers. This change provoked resentment and, correlatively, the dalits assertion polarized the upper and lower castes.

During her two terms in office, and especially her second term, Mayawati succeeded in building a new political presence for dalits. She tried to make good the promise of political empowerment by filling the reserved quota for Scheduled Castes and appointing them to important positions in the government. This was accomplished through large-scale transfers of bureaucrats; 1350 civil and police officials were transferred during her six month tenure in 1997. As many as 467 members of the Indian Administrative service (IAS), 380 officers of the Indian Police Service, 300 members of the Provincial Civil Service, and 250 Provincial Police were transferred. Dubbed as a 'transfer industry' by the Allahabad high court, the large-scale transfers placed dalits in key positions in the state

and local administration. At the end of Mayawati's second term in office, a quarter of the district magistrates and superintendents of police and more than a quarter of the principal secretaries in 1997 belonged to the Scheduled Castes.

In terms of new policies or programmes there was little to show from her two terms of government. But it could be argued that the BSP had not been in power long enough to initiate major development programmes. Mayawati, however, claimed that her government had done some indispensable work for dalits during two short stints in power. These achievements were: (i) sharpened emancipatory campaigns among the dalits; (ii) confronted the existing upper caste bias of the state apparatus in order to make way for lower castes; (iii) accelerated the passage of resources and funds via government programmes for the Scheduled Castes; and (iv) secured dalits' access to some government land. Serious land reform was not on the BSP agenda. It limited itself to efforts that enabled dalits to take possession of land, they had already been allotted. Nonetheless, land reforms have given a measure of land security to the dalits: 158,000 dalits were given possession over 1.20 lakh acres of land. In addition, unauthorized possession by dalits of Gaon Sabha land prior to June 1995 was regularized, benefiting 1500 Scheduled Caste families.[19]

The most significant programme of her second term was the Ambedkar Village Development Scheme, which provided development funds and infrastructure to 15,000 Ambedkar villages, with a 30 per cent dalit population. Basically, model villages were built by transferring funds and resources from other programmes spread over large areas, and concentrating them in smaller pockets. Though it is too early to assess the policy impact of Ambedkarization or reveal how many people have benefited from the programme, there is no denying that the initiative generated considerable enthusiasm among BSP cadres and the masses, even as it kindled the hostilities of other castes, particularly those who are just as poor as the dalits. Though modest, some of these measures—such as doubling the amount of scholarship money to high school students belonging to the Scheduled Castes, or the decision to double the scholarship admissible to children belonging to the families engaged in unhygienic occupations—have boosted dalit

[19] *The Times of India*, 18 September 1997.

confidence simply by the preference given to them by a dalit-led government.

Within the larger administration of the state, Mayawati offered her constituency the greatest possibilities of obtaining access to jobs, offices, and power. In a state where caste politics is deeply entrenched, BSP's caste-based analysis of dalit deprivation was bound to appeal to them. Benefits in UP were distributed on the basis of patronage; consequently, dalits supported their 'own' elites in the expectation that they would share the spoils of power and wealth once they obtained government positions. But the BSP has succeeded in retaining dalit support without always delivering material benefits or political office.[20] It could be argued that its success owed much to the radical emphasis placed by the party on contesting upper caste oppression. This aspect of its mobilization programme is critical because the party did not subscribe to any economic programme or ideology and hardly ever proposed new policies. In these circumstances, the politics of symbolism and recognition has been given priority to encourage the growth of their own constituency. An enormous amount of its energy has been spent in the politicization of dalits through symbolic acts of dalit empowerment and resisting upper caste hegemony, rather than in securing material benefits. As one IAS officer put it, 'The dalit fight is not for economic emancipation, it is a battle for social recognition. If the dalit assertion was for economic rights then we would back the Communist parties. We are struggling for dignity and participation in government which gives us social status.'[21] Towards this end, the BSP emphasized the themes of recovering dignity and status. In this connection the most flamboyant gesture of Mayawati's government was to build a Parivartan Chowk in the centre of Lucknow that would have statues of the great-anti-Brahmin leaders: Jyotiba Phule, Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, Ambedkar, Shahu Maharaj. This was supplemented by the installation of Ambedkar statues in every village and town; organization of Ambedkar melas; development

[20] Interview, S. R. Darapuri, Inspector General of Police, Economic Intelligence Wing, UP government.

[21] This points was emphasized in a number of interviews with Scheduled Caste officers in Lucknow. The point was repeatedly made by S. R. Lakha, Cane Commissioner, UP government. Interview, Lucknow, 22 August 1997. He is also the Secretary of the Uttar Pradesh IAS Association.

of Ambedkar parks in every district, carving out new districts and naming them after dalit leaders; and instituting awards in memory of a pantheon of dalit heroes. These symbolic measures were meant to challenge the upper castes' political and cultural hegemony. Indeed it had an electrifying effect on the collective social status of the dalits.

Although gains in dignity and self-respect are important, they make sense because they were linked to the more tangible promise of political empowerment for the Scheduled Castes, as well as some improvement in economic opportunities.[22] Ultimately the principle of proportional representation played a key role in helping the party retain its hold on dalit loyalties. Mayawati achieved an increased representation of Scheduled Castes by an overt focus on caste identity as the sole criterion for distributing tickets and posts. This resulted in the political empowerment of dalits in UP, greater than in any other state. It is certainly true that the stable vote of Scheduled Castes for the BSP was the principal reason why it could promote dalit empowerment. The preferential treatment given to dalits in turn contributed to its durability, and undoubtedly, this was because they had 'their' party and their 'own' chief minister, and power was exercised for their benefit. In other words, UP's political experience indicates that dalits used their votes to, at once, affirm identities and avenge past humiliations, as well as to secure instrumental benefits.

IV

The significant political transformation brought about by the dalit assertion should not, however, be allowed to mask the inequalities that continue to exist for the majority of dalits within UP. Benefits have flowed to a privileged minority within the lower castes; the dalits still remain the most dispossessed and disadvantaged group.[23]

[22] Interview, Rohit Nandan, Director of Information, UP government, 22 August 1998.

[23] Caste differences in educational levels are even now very marked. Wide spread illiteracy makes it difficult for disadvantaged groups to ensure that their needs receive due attention in public debates and resource allocation. Education is an important tool for effective participation in democratic politics. Yet, there were no political campaigns or bold initiatives to improve basic education in the state. On the contrary, there is evidence of a serious decline

A point worth noting is that low levels of incomes and education, rather than just under-representation and non-recognition, is the major constraint on access to and spread of social opportunities. Yet, most of the newly mobilized people in UP continue to see themselves as members of castes and communities anxious to preserve their group, rather than individual or class, interests. Even though political competition is interwined with an intensification of social conflict at the class level, the tendency is to use mobilization as a means for winning political power, and not as a condition for intragroup equality and development. Redressing disadvantage and deprivation within this framework of empowerment from above prevented the rectification of inequalities of class, especially at the lower rungs of the social order. The strategy of the Samajwadi Party and the BSP certainly enhanced the political power of the OBCs/dalits and their ability to influence state politics, but this cannot substitute for radical social and economic change that is imperative in UP. It is difficult to imagine how the abbreviation of the political power of dominant castes could be limited to the government sector. It is hardly possible for the BSP to preside over governance without addressing the land question or without doing something about the economic and extra-economic oppression of agricultural labourers, for example. The BSP faces a strategic predicament: its autonomous politics has raised the political profile of dalits at the local level, which requires the government to support local resistance. But tackling local problems entails a class approach to pressurize the government for implementation of economic redistribution, which a caste-based following cannot achieve and which the party wants to avoid. Far from generating social and political dynamism, caste mobilization and sectional governance tend to block much-needed structural change.

The failure to address inequalities in education, health, and employment opportunities, which are in fact a reflection of inequalities in the social and economic powers of different groups, in not a unique feature of lower caste parties. Equity in distribution was never the priority of any government. The political

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in real per capita expenditure on education by 20 per cent between 1991–2 and 1993–4. See K. Seeta Prabhu, 'Structural Adjustment and Financing of Elementary Education: The Indian Experience', *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, no. 9, 1995, p. 37.

importance of the state notwithstanding, UP remains one of the poorest and least developed states in the Union. This is reflected in its high levels of mortality, fertility, undernutrition, illiteracy, social inequality, and the slow pace of poverty decline.[24] The most striking is the high degree of inequality experienced by women in terms of life expectancy, literacy, access to health facilities, and property in land. Even the redistributional programmes introduced in the early 1970s, at the height of the *garibi hatao* campaign have produced insignificant results because the state lacked both the commitment and institutions required for their implementation.[25] These institutions include the Public Distribution System, the Integrated Rural Development Programmes, and the Integrated Child Development Schemes. These programmes—which involve transfers of various kinds to target groups and no redistribution of assets between different classes—are easier to implement and, yet, the gap between promise and delivery is very wide. There were no significant initiatives—comparable to health care in Kerala, social security in Tamil Nadu, land reforms in West Bengal, employment guarantee schemes in Maharashtra, and panchayati raj in Karnataka—to promote social development. No serious social reform, after zamindari abolition in the early 1950s, ever made headway in UP.

Social and economic development have been stymied by an unbridgeable chasm between the rhetoric of development and the ground realities of implementing socio-economic policies which required structural changes in the pattern of social relations. In this context an important impediment has been the nature of agrarian politics. These have revolved around the interests of surplus producers in receiving input subsidies and procurement prices for foodgrains. The leadership of political parties and farmer's movements has been firmly in the hands of this class. Distributive policies could not be sustained in the absence of significant public action from below. The state machinery, police, and village-level bureaucracy were tilted in favour of landed groups, not least

[24] For instance, child survival, mortality, and literacy levels are below almost all other states, Jean Drèze and Haris Gazdar point to three social failures: low levels of education, the restricted role of women in society, and the poor functioning of public services. See Jean Drèze and Haris Gazdar, 'Uttar Pradesh': The Burden of Inertia, op. cit., pp. 40–61.

[25] Ibid.

because the bureaucracy recruited from the upper castes shared the concerns of the rural rich. The privileges of governmental control have been exploited for sectional benefit of those with political and bureaucratic power, or those with the opportunity to influence political action to challenge the oppressive patterns of caste, class, and gender relations.

Historically, the new groups in UP have had a more difficult time achieving what non-Brahmins achieved in south India, at least partly because lower caste politics in UP lacked ideological content. In the south, the non-Brahmin movement institutionalized participation at an early stage, and developed gradually enough to allow upper castes time to adjust to their loss of power; this small minority moved into the commercial and industrial sectors. In UP, the upper castes form a fifth and the Brahmins nearly 10 per cent of the population. Besides, the organized sector was not the monopoly of Brahmins alone. Diverse groups such as Kayasths, Banias, elite sections of Muslims shared power. The wider range and large proportion of upper castes made it harder to organize a non-Brahmin movement to displace them.[26] The upper castes dominated the government and political organizations. While the reservation of government jobs was the principal channel of upward mobility for the OBCs and the Scheduled Castes, government jobs remained the most attractive career option for the upper castes as well because in contrast to the south, alternative avenues of employment in UP's stagnant industrial economy were limited. An opportunity for political change in UP arose only when the upper castes abandoned the Congress in favour of the BJP. This led to the disintegration of the Congress vote, creating a crucial opening for the disadvantaged groups to rally behind caste-based parties committed to social justice for deprived groups.

Eventually, such a group-empowerment strategy cannot bring about substantive change. The two subjects that have the greatest capacity to influence the well-being of subordinate groups—land reform and education—cannot be addressed without structural reform. In fact, the BSP is the only party which can push land

[26] For a discussion of caste mobilization based on a critique of caste hierarchy, see Nandini Gooptu, 'Caste Deprivation and Politics: The Untouchables in UP Towns', in Peter Robb (ed.), *Dalit Movements and the Meaning of Labour in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993).

reform legislation in UP and accelerate the painfully slow process of mass education, since it draws support from the Scheduled Castes and lower sections of the OBCs. However, the BSP has rarely spelt out policies on these basic issues; they consider them irrelevant to the bigger project of winning power. Though the party has attempted to implement the existing policy of redistribution in favour of dalits, it cannot energetically and purposefully pursue this without a majority of its own. This is clearly ruled out in the fragmented party system of UP, structured by rough parity in numbers between the most privileged upper castes, the bloc of backward castes, and dalits. In reality both the strength and weakness of the BSP stems from its caste-bloc politics. Its strength is that the Scheduled Castes are evenly spread across the state and a dalit vote gives the party a chance in a large number of constituencies, but is also makes it logically impossible to win even a single seat without strong support from other groups. It has not however been able to attract significant support from backward castes and Muslims. It has received their support only when it fielded candidates and gave organizational responsibilities to cadres from among them.

V

Although the benefits of empowerment have been captured only by a small elite among the subordinate groups, yet UP's political system has been transformed. The emergence of the BSP has added a vital dimension to the ground level economic and political development of the lower castes. The new entrants see electoral triumph as the necessary means to gaining power and challenging the domination of the established elite. I have argued elsewhere that with all its limitations, caste-based mobilization has proved to be a successful vehicle for the political empowerment of the populous backward castes.[27] It has generated a shift in the balance of political power in the government and legislature: the gap between the upper and lower castes has been steadily narrowing since 1989, when the Janata Dal came to power. This is evident from the significant increase in the number of lower caste legislators and senior civil servants in influential government positions. However,

[27] See my *Quest for Power*, op. cit., especially Chapter 4.

it remains to be seen whether the benefits of state control can be distributed to larger sections of the population. At the same time, the rise of the lower castes has provoked the hostility of upper castes, especially in UP, where the Samajwadi Party and the BSP emerged as major political forces. In reaction, the votes of these castes were transferred en bloc to the BJP. Even before these controversies came on to the political centre stage, the predominant conflict was between the backward and upper castes. The rise of dalits and their consolidation behind the BSP intensified this conflict, but it is clear that caste-based mobilization alone cannot continue to win mandates for lower caste leaders.

Given the BJP's continued influence in UP politics, there are two possible strategies available to lower caste leaders. One is a form of all-embracing distributional politics committed to channelling state resources towards the improvement of all, regardless of particularism. This is conspicuous by its absence from the UP scene. The difficulties of this policy under present political conditions is evident from the Congress performance in the 1998 elections, when the party failed to win a single seat from the state. In 1998, its vote fell below eight per cent and a majority of its candidates forfeited their deposit.

The second alternative is a coalition of the lower castes and minorities led by the Samajwadi Party-BSP combine. Such a broad-based social coalition, or even an electoral adjustment between the Samajwadi Party and the BSP, would deny power to the upper castes and the BJP in UP, power that is critical to its control of the Centre. In the process, they could bag many more seats and emerge as important players in state and national politics. This was the lesson of the 1996 elections. In them, the absence of an understanding between secular parties helped the BJP to win fifty-two seats. The Samajwadi Party and BSP together polled 45.6 per cent of the vote but only won eighteen and six seats respectively. In thirty-four of the fifty-two seats that the BJP won, its share of popular vote was less than the combined vote of the Samajwadi Party and BSP. Yet, backward and lower caste leaders are averse to the formation of a broad alliance. Rather, they are engaged in a bitter struggle for power as both compete for scarce state resources. The increasing importance of the BSP and the assertiveness of its leaders has complicated patterns of social conflict and the possibility of making such alliances. Their autonomy

and independence have no doubt increased the political consciousness of dalits and promoted their empowerment, but they have also brought them into conflict with both the Samajwadi Party and the BJP. This is also why the BJP was relatively successful in breaking the Samajwadi Party-BSP alliance.[28]

Even after the BJP's seizure of power, the OBCs and the Scheduled Castes, the Samajwadi Party and the BSP persisted with their rhetoric over which one authentically represented the lower castes. Although the break-up of the BJP–BSP alliance in October 1997 was a good opportunity for the non-upper castes to come together, they did not. This was due partly to ground-level OBC–dalit hostility, and partly to the power struggle between the two groups which has moved from being a contest between unequals to a struggle for power between near equals, facilitated by the BSP's pursuit of a dalit empowerment agenda since 1993.[29]

Even as caste interests proliferate, there is however no simple dualism of upper castes versus lower castes; rather, the growing power of the BJP could subvert the hard-won gains of the latter. Backward and lower caste parties can act as a brake on Hindu consolidation only when they are united on a common platform. Should the Muslims more than half the backward castes, and the Scheduled Castes be united behind the Samajwadi Party, the BSP, and what remains of the Janata Dal, the BJP would not win electoral majorities in UP. It has come to power by capitalizing on the divisions between these competing castes and parties. This is the central point of the 1998 parliamentary elections, when the BSP won only four seats, despite winning more than 20 per cent of the vote. In reality, the consolidation of dalits behind the BSP has been advantageous for the BJP. By refusing to come to terms with the changed political situation and allowing their egos to clash, the leaders of both the Samajwadi Party and the BSP have caused serious damage to their own interests. The predicament is that the BSP's unreliability as an electoral partner stands in the way

[28] Mulayam Singh Yadav argues that his party suffered too much under Mayawati's chief ministership for him to consider a patch-up with her. Mayawati feels that Yadav's open opposition to the Atrocities Against Dalits Act during her term in office would harm the party's attempts to consolidate its political base.

[29] Interview, Director Information, UP government, Lucknow, 22 August 1997.

of an alliance with any party; on the other hand, the high vote of the BSP clearly establishes its electoral clout, making an alliance with it imperative. It is with this clout that BSP leaders hope to be in a position to dictate outcomes at the national and state levels.

Presumably, the lower caste leaders recognize the damage caused by these divisions but are not prepared to subdue them because they can still obtain political office, and hence do not feel an urgent need for coalitions. Undoubtedly, caste constituencies help them to bargain with national parties, but it also limits their horizon, and especially the prospect of extending their political influence to other states.[30] There must still be room to navigate between these constraints to find new ways that do not altogether abandon self-empowerment, and to pursue them within coalitions. Surely, lower caste parties need caste constituencies to gain access to government, as well as a broader coalition to uphold and stabilize their access. In the absence of such coalitions they will remain stalemated and trapped within the specific castes they seek to represent, while the BJP presses ahead with its mobilization on ethno-religious lines.

Today, there is little doubt that the growth of political consciousness around caste issues and related strategies of empowerment has provided a discursive vehicle for the mobilization of what has clearly been a progressive social and political force. It has also underwritten a new argument for secularism, one that opposes caste to communalism. But it has left behind a legacy in which caste has been bolstered as a focus of political identity and affiliation, one that may exclude broader social commitment and collective action.

North India's recent history, and that of Uttar Pradesh in particular, indicates that for collective action to become a real force, political parties must go beyond caste. The challenge is to accommodate interests and identities which are electorally disaggregated into a negotiable frame of governance. In the meantime, lower caste parties have managed to fragment the legacy of the Congress; they have also rebutted the BJP's claim of Hindu unity by forcing it to negotiate separately with competing Hindu groups, rather than with Hindus as constituents of a single homogeneous

[30] Kanchan Chandra and Chandrika Parmar, 'Party Strategies in Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections, 1996', op. cit., pp. 219–20.

community. Although the lower caste parties do not have an agenda of structural reform, they have managed to bring formerly marginal groups into the government and diverted public resources and flow of benefits to them. Unlike the past, it is now difficult for any government to ignore the interests of dalits. Significantly, this has opened new spaces for the lower castes to enter the urban middle classes. This could well be the beginning of a more radical democratization of north Indian society, as the majority of dalits and OBCs begins to realize that its economic and social condition has not improved much as a result of proportional representation in the state.

13

Bringing Society Back In: Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralism in South India

NARENDRA SUBRAMANIAN*

Most scholars trace the trajectories of ethnic politics mainly to relations between states and ethnic groups and see in accommodative arrangements arrived at by states and ethnic elites the key to reconciling ethnic mobilization with stability and pluralism.[1] However, both explicit and implicit compacts which successfully accommodated diverse ethnic groups in such societies as Lebanon, the former Soviet Union, the former Yugoslavia, and India have suffered erosion or collapse over the last two decades. While similar compacts have proven more durable in Switzerland and Belgium, the divergent outcomes seem to be rooted not in the nature of the compacts but in the ongoing interactions between political mobilizers and social groups.[2] Such compacts on their own

* Field research for this project was funded by the American Institute of Indian Studies and the Social Research Council. This paper was initially written in 1995 and its central arguments were elaborated further and changed considerably in the process in Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political Parties, Citizens and Democracy in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[1] Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977) and Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985) are among the best such analyses.

[2] By explicit compacts, I refer to consociational and other arrangements for sharing power among ethnic groups, seen for instance in Lebanon, Belgium, and Switzerland. By implicit compacts, I denote the federal, confederal, and

rarely produce substantive commitments to tolerance in state and ethnic elites, which may challenge features of the compacts in the midst of growing ethnic mobilization or get outflanked by emergent counter-elites, leading only too often to violent conflict and the suppression of civil rights. This is because the rewards and disincentives created by state action do not solely shape the ultimate goals of political mobilizers and citizens, even if they influence their tactics. So, the predominant scholarly focus on state-movement and state-ethnic group relations is inadequate to understand the conditions under which ethnic politics may stably coexist with a pluralist social order. Rather, one needs to consider how ethnic politics is shaped by interactions between political mobilizers and society.

This paper explores the role of party–society transactions in reconciling the Dravidian movement, the oldest and most durable ethnic movement in South Asia, with pluralism and sustained

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autonomist arrangements and preferential policies which have helped incorporate ethnic elites in many multicultural countries (the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, USA, Canada, Nigeria, Malaysia, India, etc.), but were not introduced through explicit bargains. Arend Lijphart, *Conflict and Coexistence in Belgium: The Dynamics of a Culturally Divided Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981); Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, op. cit.; Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), op. cit.; Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Philip G. Roeder, 'Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization', *World Politics*, vol. 43, January 1991, pp. 196–232; Mark Beissinger, 'Demise of an Empire-State: Identity, Legitimacy, and the Deconstruction of Soviet Politics' and Edward Friedman, 'Ethnic Identity and the De-Nationalization and Democratization of Leninist States' in Crawford Young (ed.), *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp. 93–115, 222–41; Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); Hudson Meadwell, 'The Politics of Nationalism in Quebec', *World Politics*, vol. 45, January 1993, pp. 203–41; Alain G. Gagnon (ed.), *Quebec: State and Society* (Toronto: Methuen, 1984); Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Delhi: Sage, 1991); R. S. Milne, *Politics in Ethnically Bipolar States: Guyana, Malaysia, Fiji* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981); Thomas Sowell, *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1990).

contestation. ('Pluralism' denotes the existence of considerable, and somewhat autonomous, associational activity. It does not mean ethnic diversity, although a pluralistic order would enable citizens to affirm ethnic difference.) While the proponents of the state-centered approach to explaining political change call for 'bringing the state back in', I highlight my departure from them with the motto 'bring society back in'.[3] My emphasis on the importance of societal factors in the maintenance of pluralism and concern with pluralism as an important component of democratic life follows the spirit of both recent and classical work.[4]

An earlier generation of scholars considered party–society relations by outlining durable voter alignments,[5] but largely ignored

[3] Peter Evans *et al.* (eds), *Bringing the State Back in* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). The 'state-in-society' perspective of Joel Migdal *et al.* (eds), *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) is broadly compatible with my approach. While most of the essays in the latter collection seek to explain state and policy formation, this chapter is mainly concerned with the trajectories of mass politics.

[4] See John Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1988); John Keane (ed.), *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988); Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State–Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan (eds), *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988); Michael Bratton, 'Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa', *World Politics*, vol. 41, no. 3, April 1989, pp. 407–30; Marcia A. Weigle and Jim Butterfield, 'Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes: The Logic of Emergence', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 25, October 1992, pp. 1–23; Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, 'Secondary Associations and Democratic Governance', *Politics and Society*, vol. 20, December 1992, pp. 393–471; Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Naomi Chazan, 'Engaging the State: Associational Life in Sub-Saharan Africa', in Joel Migdal *et al.* (eds), *State Power and Social Forces*, pp. 255–89. This literature is inspired by de Tocqueville and Marx and draws from *Robert Dahl, Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy Versus Control* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982).

[5] Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York: Free Press, 1967); Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Processes of Development* (New York: David McKay, 1970); Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1970). Regarding

how mobilizing strategies and mass responses shaped the mass sentiments which underlay partisanship.[6] This paper addresses this question in the process of examining the impact of political mobilization on civil society formation.

The Dravidian movement has played a significant role in the populous southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu since the First World War, and parties derived from it have dominated politics in the state since 1967.[7] It began with exclusionary ethnic appeals

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early post-colonial India, see Richard Sisson (ed.), 'Elections and Party Politics in India: A Symposium', *Asian Survey*, vol. 10, no. 11, November 1970), pp. iii–iv, 937–1030; Myron Weiner and John O. Field (eds), *Electoral Politics in the Indian States* (Delhi: Manohar, 1975); Biplab Dasgupta and W. H. Morriss-Jones (eds), *Patterns and Trends in Indian Politics: An Ecological Analysis of Aggregate Data on Society and Elections* (Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1976).

[6] This made them poor bases for understanding how party systems responded to social change. Samuel Barnes, *Representation in Italy: Institutionalized Tradition and Electoral Choice* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977) was an important exception. The examination of mobilization and its mass impact was limited in accounts of party–society relations in India in the early post-colonial years, when mass mobilization was limited. See Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967). This remains true of recent studies although deeper political mobilization has since occurred. See, for example, Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Scholars have pointed to the way ethnic stereotypes induce support for ethnic movements, but few have explored how political mobilization influences these stereotypes and the actions they inspire. See Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 141–9, 167–71, 445–9; Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 47, 113, 167, 238, 270–3; Nelson Kasfir, 'Cultural Sub-Nationalism in Uganda' in Victor A. Olorunsola (ed.), *The Politics of Cultural Sub-Nationalism in Africa* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1972), pp. 51–148.

[7] For accounts of the movement, see Narendra Subramanian, 'Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy: Mobilization and Representation in South India' (Cambridge, MA: MIT, Ph.D. dissertation, 1993); Marguerite R. Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Eugene Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969); Eugene Irschick, *Tamil Revivalism in the 1930s* (Madras: Cre-A, 1986); Robert Hardgrave, *Essays in the Political Sociology of South India* (Delhi: Usha, 1979); Phillip Spratt,

which had the potential to cause considerable conflict and undermine civil society. Yet, Tamil Nadu has experienced limited violence, relative stability and tolerance, a vigorous and autonomous civic life, and the increased representation of emergent groups through the nearly three decades of Dravidianist dominance. Moreover, the success of the Dravidian parties has inhibited the growth of Hindu revivalism which has caused much violence in other parts of India.

Part I elaborates on the incongruence between the Dravidian movement's initial appeals and eventual impact. Part II indicates some limitations of state-centred accounts of the recent ethnic upsurge in India, and outlines an alternative understanding. Part III identifies the aspects of party–society relations which enabled the benign impact of Dravidianist dominance. Part IV shows that these factors crucially aided two changes in movement trajectory, associated with major splits in movement organizations, and urged the movement towards a tolerant and pluralist politics. Part V clarifies the roles of the different dimensions of party–society interaction through a comparison with other South Asian ethnic movements.

The Puzzle of Dravidian Politics

The first mass Dravidianist organization was the Self Respect Association, later renamed the Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) (Party of the Dravidians), which developed small pockets of support during the inter-war period through appeals to speakers of the Tamil language, perhaps all South Indians, other than those of the upper Brahmin caste (see Table 13.1).[8] It claimed that members of this

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DMK in Power (Bombay: Nachiketa, 1969); K. Nambi Arooran, *Tamil Renaissance and Dravidian Nationalism, 1905–1944* (Madurai: Koodal, 1980); M. S. S. Pandian, *The Image Trap: M. G. Ramachandran in Film and Politics* (Delhi: Sage, 1992); Charles Ryerson, *Regionalism and Religion: The Tamil Renaissance and Popular Hinduism* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1988).

[8] The first Dravidianist party was an elite organization called the South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party). In 1938 the Self Respect Association merged with the Justice Party, which was renamed the DK in 1944. As the original Justice Party was virtually moribund by 1938, the Self Respect Association and the DK, in effect, represented different phases of the same organization.

imprecisely defined group were descendants of a Dravidian race, distinct from the Aryans from whom both the North Indians and the South Indian Brahmins were said to have been descended. The DK opposed Brahminical Hinduism and religion in general as being the foundation of all oppression, and highlighted its atheism through demonstrative acts of heresy such as breaking idols and abusing deities, which outraged much of society. Its heresies were also aimed at the political orthodoxy of post-colonial India—the DK called for secession and opposed the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religious belief and practice, an important cornerstone of tolerance in India's multi-religious society.[9] If the identification of Brahmins as Aryan outsiders and the call to expel them bore a resemblance to the appeals of European fascism, this impression was strengthened by the DK leader's claim that he was inspired by Hitler and Mussolini, among others.[10]

TABLE 13.1: Timing of Emergence of Major Movement Organizations

1917	Justice Party (dissolved in 1944)
1926	Self Respect Association (merged with Justice Party in 1938)
1944	Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) (successor of Self Respect Association)
1949	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) (offshoot of the DK)
1972	Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK) (offshoot of the DMK)
1994	Marumalarchchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) (offshoot of DMK)

The decolonization of India precipitated a split in the DK, leading to the formation in 1949 of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) (Party for the Progress of *Dravidam*) which moderated the DK's ethnic appeals by incorporating them within a populist discourse. The DMK appealed to a popular Tamil or Dravidian community, distinguished from social elites with close links to the colonial and early post-colonial states. The DMK, in turn, split in 1972 when a popular film star, M. G. Ramachandran, who had attracted many voters to the party, formed the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK) (*Anna's* Party for the

[9] The DK argued that a guarantee of free religious practice implies official acceptance of the caste discrimination intrinsic to Hinduism. Narendra Subramanian *Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy*, op. cit., p. 188.

[10] Ibid., pp. 117–33, 139–43, 161–81, 185–9.

Progress of *Dravidam*), which further toned down Dravidianist ethnic militancy.

Some of the appeals of the two later Dravidianist parties (DMK and ADMK) also had the potential to cause conflict and undermine associational life. The DMK demanded secession until the early 1960s, launched major language agitations in the mid 1960s, and raised shrill nativist calls in the mid 1970s in the hope of discrediting the ADMK leader, M. G. Ramchandran (popularly known as MGR), who was not of Tamil origin. MGR's films, which were crucial to the ADMK's appeal, exalted individual heroes who battled oppressive elites to provide protection and dignity to women and the poor. They appeared to urge these groups, which became the ADMK's main supporters, to passively await the emergence of such a benevolent figure rather than press their demands through civic action.

The DMK became the second ethnic party to gain control over an Indian state when it replaced the Congress party in power in 1967 and ruled for nine years. It was replaced by the ADMK in 1977, and the two parties have dominated state politics since the 1970s (see Table 13.2). Far from undermining tolerance as some initial appeals suggested it would, Dravidianist dominance brought with it no major attacks against ethnic out-groups. Further, it inhibited the growth of forces which have provoked ethnic conflict elsewhere in India. Notably, Hindu revivalism is weakest in Tamil Nadu, which has seen the least violence when religious riots have broken out in India periodically over the last two decades.

TABLE 13.2: Period of Rule of Different Parties in Tamil Nadu[1]

Party	Years
Congress	1947–67
DMK	1967–76
ADMK	1977–88
DMK	1989–91
ADMK	1991–6
DMK	1996- now

[1] There were intervening phases when the national government directly ruled the state, after dismissing the elected state governments, in 1976–7, 1980, 1988–9, and 1991.

Dravidianist mobilization aided the growth of political participation, enriched civic life, and increased the representation of emergent groups. While the DMK's share of the popular vote increased from 12.8 per cent to 40.6 per cent between 1957 and 1967, the voter participation rate increased from 49.3 per cent to 76.6 per cent and has remained higher since then in Tamil Nadu than in India as a whole (see Tables 13.3 and 13.4). The Dravidian parties promoted the growth of literary and debating societies, reading rooms, and film fan clubs. Autonomous caste associations, farmers' associations, and some white collar unions grew stronger during Dravidianist rule, and effectively opposed some of the state government's policies. Dravidianist regimes created new entitlements for emergent groups, notably quotas for the lower and intermediate castes in college education and government jobs (which are as high as 69 per cent in Tamil Nadu), and a free lunch scheme for school children and the elderly which has fed over a fifth of the state's population for more than a decade.[11]

The incongruence between the exclusionary nature of many of the Dravidian movement's appeals and the largely pluralist consequences of its dominance presents a puzzle which is dealt with in the following sections.

India's Ethnic Upsurge: Towards an Understanding

The course of the Dravidian movement might have seemed typical of the Indian experience till the late 1970s, which was considered a signal success case in the containment of ethnic conflict in a culturally diverse society. Scholars attributed India's success in this regard to the state's effective accommodation of those ethnic demands considered compatible with the official ideology of pan-Indian nationalism and secularism. As practised by the Indian state, nationalism meant that India's territorial integrity was sacrosanct; and secularism implied the rejection of the claims of religious groups to political rights (for example, separate electorates), but not necessarily to civil rights (for example, distinct

[11] Narendra Subramanian *Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy*, p. 145–439.

TABLE 13.3: Legislative Assembly Elections, Tamil Nadu State
Key Parties' Share of the Valid Vote (in per cent)[1]

	Election year				
Party	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971
Congress[2]	35.0	45.3	46.1	41.4	–
Pan-Indian parties[3]	66.7	61.2	63.7	54.0	43.1
Other Pan-Indian parties	31.7	15.8	17.5	12.6	43.1
DMK	–	12.8	27.1	40.6	48.6
Hindu revivalists	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1
Ethnic parties[4]	8.8	14.2	31.0	41.0	50.4
Other ethnic parites	8.6	1.4	3.8	0.2	1.7

	Election Year				
Party	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
Congress	17.5	20.5	16.5	20.2	15.4
Pan-Indian	39.9	31.4	26.1	29.7	21.5
Other Pan-Indian	22.4	10.9	9.7	9.5	6.1
DMK	24.9	22.5	29.5	32.4	22.5
ADMK	30.4	38.8	37.1	30.7	44.4
Hindu revivalists	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ethnic parties	55.6	61.8	67.0	64.1	74.2
Other ethnic	0.3	0.4	0.4	1.0	7.3

[1] Compiled from Government of Tamil Nadu, Public (Elections) Department, *General Elections to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, 1952–84: Statistical Abstract* (Madras: Tamil Nadu Government Press, 1986), pp. 11–13; Government of Tamil Nadu, Public (Elections) Department, *Report on Ninth General Elections to the State Assembly* (Madras: Tamil Nadu Government Press, 1990); Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Secretariat, *Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly 'Who's Who'* (Madras: Tamil Nadu Government Press, 1992), pp. xii–xvi.

[2] Denotes the Indian National Congress for the period 1952–69, and the offshoot led by Indira Gandhi and her successors (Congress-R or Congress-I) thereafter.

[3] Alludes to parties which share the idea of a homogeneous Indian nation within which all ethnic groups are equally included. Includes the Congress and its offshoots, the Socialists and the Communists, but excludes the Hindu revivalists who imagine the Indian nation in terms of neo-traditional vision of Hinduism.

[4] Refers to parties which propose alternatives to pan-Indian nationalism. The figures understate their electoral strength from the 1980s onwards as the major pan-Indian parties benefitted through this period from electoral alliances with the Dravidianists, which the latter entered partly because of the control of the former over the national government.

TABLE 13.4: Turnout Rates in National and State Elections

Year	India[1]	Tamil Nadu[2]
1952	45.7	55.9
1957	47.7	49.3
1962	55.4	70.7
1967	61.3	76.6
1971	55.3	71.8
1977	60.5	61.6
1980	56.9	65.4
1984	64.1	73.6
1989	62.0	69.3
1991	56.7	63.8

[1] Turnout rates reported are for elections to the national Parliament. See Paul: Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 104.

[2] Turnout rates reported are for the state Assembly elections. Compiled from data disks supplied by the Tamil Nadu Election Commission; Government of Tamil Nadu (for bibliographic details see fn. 1 of Table 13.3); Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Secretariat (for bibliographic details see fn. 1 of Table 13.3), p. XV.

family laws).[12] The adoption of federalism, the formation of states along lines of language use, and the extension of preferential quotas to groups (largely castes) deemed underprivileged, reinforced by threats to repress most religious and all secessionist demands, were taken to have ensured stability.[13] Such state-centred explanations

[12] The term 'secularism' refers in this article to this approach of the Indian government to social control. See Donald Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); T. N. Madan, 'Secularism in its Place', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4, November 1987, pp. 747–59; Ashis Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', *Alternatives*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1988, pp. 177–94; and Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

[13] Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*; Paul Brass, *Language, Religion, and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics* (Delhi: Sage, 1989); Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

have proven inadequate to explain the explosion of ethnic violence through many parts of India over the last decade.

Despite the official ideology of and practise of secularism, exclusionary religious revivalism has grown rapidly for over a decade. The growth of Hindu revivalism, the strongest of these forces, has been dramatized in recent years by the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the leading opposition party in Parliament, the destruction of a medieval mosque after a decade-long agitation to build a Hindu temple on the site where the mosque was located, and the nearly nationwide riots which arose in its aftermath.[14] The accommodative bargains which the Indian state struck with ethnic elites have unravelled in Punjab and Kashmir. The creation of a state for the speakers of the Punjabi language and the added autonomy given to Jammu and Kashmir ceased to satisfy ethnic mobilizers. Further, a new generation of ethnic militants emerged to outflank the old leaders and launched armed separatist movements that the state's brutal repression has failed to suppress.[15] Many other ethnic groups have also asserted their demands with increasing stridency.

State-centred explanations have attributed the growth of ethnic conflict in India to the state's gradual abandonment since the early 1970s, of its earlier approach of accommodative secularism because of the growing inclination of leaders to centralize power.

[14] Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today* (Delhi: Viking, 1993); Tapan Basu *et al.*, *Khakhi Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993); Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); van der Veer, 'God Must By Liberated: A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1987, pp. 283–303; Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*; Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, *The Demolition: India at the Crossroads* (Delhi: Harper Collins, 1994).

[15] It should be noted that the concessions promised in Punjab were not fully implemented and the greater autonomy formally granted to the state of Jammu and Kashmir was divested of much substance by the national government's frequent disruptions of state politics. Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, pp. 193–201, 215–27; Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, pp. 111–237; Rajiv Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Raju G. C. Thomas (ed.), *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992).

Centralizing ambitions are said to have led the national government to infringe on the autonomy of state politics, undermine moderate ethnic elites by engaging periodically with ethnic extremists, and respond to the resulting tide of ethnic militancy with repression which has only augmented the disintegrative consequences.[16]

While state actions have indeed changed along such lines and led to growing opposition and conflict, state-centred accounts fail to explain why conflict has so often assumed an ethnic form of late. They overestimate the capacity of the state to shape social initiatives, and pay little attention to the influence of changing patterns of social dominance and political mobilization on the state's centralizing efforts. Besides, they ignore the ways in which the limitations of secularist social control, as practised by the Indian state since independence, have contributed to the growth of conflict. These limitations have caused the recent ethnic upsurge as much as the state's centralizing tendencies have.[17]

The course of the Sikh movement in Punjab illustrates the limits of secularist conflict management. Secularism made the state averse to accommodating demands made on behalf of the Sikhs even when these demands did not pose definite threats to either tolerance or India's territorial integrity.[18] This urged some Sikh leaders to tactically exchange the banner of religion for one of language during the agitation for the creation of a new state within the Indian Union in the 1960s. However, it did not lead them to abandon a politics of Sikh identity, which took a violent and secessionist turn by the 1980s due to the government's implacable opposition. The government's intransigent posture was based on the secularist logic of not extending political rights to religious

[16] Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Myron Weiner, *The Indian Paradox*; Rajni Kothari, *Politics and the People: In Search of a Humane India* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1989). In an approach closer to mine, Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent*, and Atul Kohli, 'Centralization and Powerlessness: India's Democracy in a Comparative Perspective', in Joel Migdal, *et al.* (eds), *State Power and Social Forces*, pp. 89–107 give state–society interactions the central role.

[17] Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, p. 192 notes in passing the contribution of 'secular ideology itself' to disintegration, but this observation does not drive his analysis.

[18] Neither the demand for a Sikh state within the Indian union in the 1950s and early 1960s, nor the Anandpur Sahib resolution of 1973 issued on behalf of a distinct Sikh political community were clearly intolerant or secessionist.

groups rather than on a departure from a secularist conflict management as a means to centralize power. While the Congress party initially encouraged the Sikh preacher, Bhindranwale, who became the revered hero of the militancy, this was not the underlying reason for the surge in his popularity and that of his movement in the early 1980s.[19]

Not only do changes in the nature of state action not adequately explain the growth of ethnic conflict in regions like Punjab, they do not account for the relatively benign course of the Dravidian movement. The Indian state was not significantly more responsive to ethnic demands in Tamil Nadu than in either Punjab or Kashmir, and its centralizing efforts intruded upon Tamil politics in many ways. It rejected the secessionist and autonomist demands of the Dravidianists, and its concessions on national language policy failed to satisfy Tamil nationalist sentiments which were expressed in major language agitations in the 1960s.[20] The national government dismissed state governments whose terms in office had not expired on as many as four occasions in Tamil Nadu, and ruled the state directly for significant lengths of time twice to promote the prospects of the party ruling the country.[21] Further, parties in power at the national level have allied themselves with both major Dravidian parties at different points of time since the early 1970s, guided by expectations of electoral advantage rather than the respective stances of the Dravidian parties on ethnic issues, much as they did with different factions of the Sikh movement in Punjab. If tolerance and stability were preserved nevertheless in Tamil Nadu, I argue that this was due to the way the Dravidian parties transacted with society. Conversely, the rather different

[19] The Congress party's support for Bhindranwale plays a central role however in Brass's account of the turn towards violence and secession in Sikh politics. Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, pp. 178–83, 190–9.

[20] Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy*, pp. 254–61; Jyotirindra Dasgupta, *Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 159–96; K. S. Ramanujam, *The Big Change* (Madras: Sundara Prachuralayam, 1967); C. Subramaniam, *Speech on Language Policy* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1978).

[21] The national government dismissed Tamil Nadu state governments in 1976, 1980, 1988, and 1991, and ruled the state directly for over a year each in 1976–7 and 1988–9.

ways in which the Hindu and Sikh revivalists interacted with society contributed to the erosion of pluralism in their regions of strength.[22]

Party–society interactions have not only shaped the divergent paths taken by ethnic forces, they have contributed to the very crisis of Indian nation-building associated with the growth of these forces. Although pan-Indianist parties dominated the elections in the early post-colonial decades (see Table 13.5), they tended to transact distantly with the middling and lower strata, reaching them, if at all, by distributing patronage through the mediation of the bureaucracy and social elites.[23] This hampered the cultivation of widespread and deeply felt attachments to official notions of the Indian citizen. The problem was compounded by the culturally thin elaboration of these notions,[24] and the limited improvements in the material life of many from the lower and intermediate strata through this period.[25] These years witnessed relative stability nevertheless due to the limited levels of political participation (see Table 13.4) and social mobilization, and the judicious distribution of patronage.

The shallow foundations on which the Indian nation was built began to pose serious problems from about the mid-1960s onwards due to the emergence of challenges to traditional patterns of dominance and the attendant expansion of the public sphere. Ethnic

[22] The Sikh and Kashmiri movements similarly abridged autonomous civic life. State repression also contributed to this outcome.

[23] Myron Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation*; Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1971). This claim does not hold for some regions where pan-Indianist parties built deeper sub-cultures, for example the Congress party in Gujarat and the Communists in Kerala.

[24] Leaders like Nehru were reluctant to give culturally thicker discourses official status out of concern that this would leave many of the cultures of India at the margins. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Press, 1986), pp. 85–166.

[25] V. M. Dandekar and N. Rath, 'Poverty in India: Dimensions and Trends', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 6, no. 1, January 1971, pp. 25–48 and no. 2, January 1971, pp. 106–46; Montek S. Ahluwalia, 'Rural Poverty in India: 1956–7 to 1973–4', Montek S. Ahluwalia *et al.*, *India: Occasional Papers* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1978); V. N. Balasubramanyam, *The Economy of India* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1984).

parties began to outdo pan-Indian parties in many regions, especially since the mid-1980s (as Table 13.5 shows) because they articulated thicker identities which drew upon the norms of groups which had been marginal to state–society transactions and, in some cases, incorporated pre-existing social networks amongst these groups more closely into their subcultures.[26]

TABLE 13.5: Pan-Indian and Ethnic Parties, Relative Shares of the Valid Vote (in per cent): Indian National Polls[1]

Year	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1984	1989	1991
Pan-Indian	67.1	70.7	74.5	69.0	75.7	74.4	70.3	62.9
Ethnic	11.6	11.3	14.3	17.1	14.4	17.5	24.5	33.6

[1] Figures are omitted for the 1977 and 1980 elections as the main ethnic party (the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, later the BJP) had merged with pan-Indianist offshoots of the Congress party to form the Janata Party through this period, making the vote shares of the pan-Indianists and the ethnic forces impossible to distinguish. Compiled from V. B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Handbook on Indian Elections, 1952–1984* (Delhi: Sage, 1984), pp. 25, 35–40, 57–9, 71–4, 89–94, 113–18, 137–42, 161–6, 650; Election Commission of India, *Report on the Ninth General Elections to the House of the People in India, 1989; Statistical* (Delhi: Election Commission of India, 1980), pp. 6–12; Election Commission of India, *Report on the Tenth General Elections to the House of the People in India, 1991: Statistical* (Delhi: Election Commission of India), pp. 8–16.

Following the lines of the proposed understanding of India's ethnic upsurge, the succeeding explanation of the impact of Dravidianist dominance in Tamil Nadu accords a central role to party–society relations.

EXPLAINING DRAVIDIANIST IMPACT: CRUCIAL VARIABLES AND BASIC STRUCTURE

Four dimensions of party–society relations shaped the trajectory and impact of the Dravidian movement—*flexible leadership strategies, cadre autonomy, supporter autonomy*, and *prior civil society strength*.

[26] These processes are examined in depth in the case of Dravidianism in Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy*, and, in the case of Hindu revivalism, in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindus and Others*, and Tapan Basu *et al.*, *Khakhi Shorts and Saffron Flags*.

(1) Movement leaders pursued *flexible mobilizing strategies* (henceforth '*flexibility*'), adjusting their appeals and demands in light of the interests and outlook of key support groups, as well as those of non-supporters they wished to court. (2) '*Cadre autonomy*' refers to the autonomy which local party units, party factions, and party-affiliated associations enjoyed from the party leadership. (3) '*Supporter autonomy*' refers to the scope supporters had to appropriate movement appeals in ways different from the explicit promises and preferred programmes of the leadership.[27] [Where the distinction between (2) and (3) is irrelevant, I refer to both as '*autonomy*'.] Autonomy within the Dravidian fold was always partial, contingent on ultimate loyalty to the party. Activists and supporters could shape local party strategies to some extent in tune with their prior outlook and interests, and many party supporters were able to pursue demands through independent associations while continuing to vote for the party. They were able to interpret leaders' ethnic appeals in a tolerant fashion, not pay heed to calls for violence, or form a new party at times if leaders persisted in exclusionary gambits. (4) '*Prior civil society strength*' alludes to the density of civic life prior to Dravidianist dominance.

These four variables reinforced each other and aided the preservation of tolerance and contestation, and the strengthening of pluralism and representation in the midst of Dravidianist electoral dominance. This is the central argument of this chapter.

Impact of the Variables on Movement Trajectory

Two Changes in Movement Trajectory

The four variables of movement–society interaction enabled two crucial strategic shifts, associated with major splits in movement organizations. These changes in movement trajectory, in turn,

[27] The tendency of subordinate groups to appropriate elite appeals to suit their purposes is an important theme in the work of the 'Subaltern Studies' collective. See Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, vols I–VI (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982–9); Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey (eds), *Subaltern Studies*, vol. VII (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds), *Subaltern Studies*, vol. VIII (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

aided pluralist outcomes. The two crucial strategic shifts were a *turn towards populism* associated with the formation of the DMK, and the *emergence of diverse populisms*, associated with the formation of the ADMK.

THE POPULIST TURN

The DMK incorporated the movement's ethnic appeals within a populist discourse which defined a 'popular Tamil/Dravidian community' in contrast with an 'elite'. The lines between the 'popular community' and the 'elite' were drawn with reference to both ethnic and other social categories. I use the term 'populism' to characterize movements, parties, and regimes which deploy distinctions between the 'people', said to have limited access to various spheres of privilege, and an elite, which is considered dominant in these spheres and culturally distinct from the 'people'. Populists claim to represent the will of the popular community to overcome its subordination.[28] This concept is analytically useful if applied (only) to cases in which such notions of the 'people' and the 'elite' significantly shape strategy, mass response, the composition of support, the structure of movement organizations, and policies pursued.[29] Populist ideologues have distinguished plebeian from patrician with reference to language and dialect use, pigmentation, types of occupation, levels of education, types of education (colonial/traditional), patterns of worship, etc.

The DMK deployed a notion of Dravidian ethnicity that was composed of many partially overlapping layers—caste and dialect use ('non-Brahmin', that is, neither Brahmin nor untouchable), language use (Tamil rather than other Indian languages or English),

[28] Definition drawn from Edward Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers and Other Essays* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 404–7; Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: New Left Books, 1977), pp. 165–7, 172–6; Christos Lyrintzis, 'The Power of Populism: The Greek Case', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 15, 1987, pp. 667–86, at pp. 669–71.

[29] Movements which use 'folkist' idioms do not fit this label if these appeals do not motivate support (for example, the Russian *Narodnaya Volya*); neither do movements which mobilize emergent groups or regimes which introduce new entitlements if they do not systematically present themselves as representatives of a 'little folk' (for example, many anti-colonial movements and Third World democracies).

occupation (non-landlord, non-professional), etc.[30] These categories were alternatively used to rally opposition to the national government and the pan-Indian parties, and to refer to the coalition, mobilized by the DMK, of groups marginal to state–society links before Dravidianist rule. No single attribute served as the primary marker of community membership, and the lines between plebeian and patrician were drawn differently in different contexts. Such a contextual definition of identity, noted in the appeals of populist movements,[31] differs markedly from the patterns of identity formation considered typical of ethno-nationalism—either around loyalty to the state or around a central cultural symbol with which other symbols are brought into congruence.[32]

Unlink the DMK, the DK had placed the Tamil speaking 'non-Brahmin' Hindu castes at the core of the Dravidian community, and other groups in concentric circles expanding outward from the core—'non-Brahmin' South Indian Hindus other than Tamils, Tamil Muslims and Christians, and the lower Hindu castes.[33]

[30] Gleaned from ideological tracts: C. N. Annadurai, *Aariya Maayai* (Aryan Mystification) (Tiruchi: Dravida Pannai, 1985); C. N. Annadurai, *Thee Paravattum* (Let the Fire Spread) (Madras: Bharathi, 1986); C. N. Annadurai, *Zamin-Inam Ozhippu* (The Abolition of *Zamins* and *Inams*) (Madras: Paari, 1986); C. N. Annadurai, *Thambikku Annavin Kadithangal* (Anna's Letters to His Young Brother) (Madras: Paari, 1986); C. N. Annadurai, *Panaththottam* (Garden of Money) (Madras: Paari, 1985); and extensive interviews of activists.

[31] Christos Lyrintzis, The Power of Populism, pp. 670–2; Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (London: MacMillan, 1969).

[32] Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, pp. 20–1, 62–3; Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, pp. 28–9, 44, 410–14; Joshua A. Fishman, 'Nationality-Nationalism and Nation-Nationalism', Joshua A. Fishman *et al.* (eds), *Language Problems of Developing Nations* (New York: John Wiley, 1968), pp. 39–51; Peter Alter, *Nationalism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), pp. 14–15; Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 9–22.

[33] E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, *Ina Izhivu Ozhiya Islame Nanmarunthu* (Islam is the Sole Remedy for Ethnic Degradation) (Madras: Pakutharivu Pathippakam, 1947); E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, *Indhiya Oru Nationa?* (Is India a Nation?) (Madras: Pakutharivu Pathippakam, 1937); Thanjai Aadalarasan (ed.), *Thanthai Periyarum Thaazhtappattorum* (Periyar and the Untouchables) (Madras: Arivukkadal Achakam, 1986); Ve. Anaimuthu (ed.), *Periyar E. Ve. Ra. Cinthanaikal* (Thoughts of Periyar) (Tiruchi: Cinthanaiyalar Kazhagam, 1974).

(The rhetorical inclusion of the inhabitants of areas beyond Tamil Nadu did not find popular acceptance however.) This vision of community was composed purely of ethnic elements, and membership in the 'outer layers' of the community was based on sharing some cultural features of the inhabitants of the core. The DMK's populist turn meant that multi-symbol congruence ceased to be a concern and Dravidian identity was attributed a cultural rather than a racial status.

Ethnic identities are commonly defined with reference to both myths of common ancestry and customs taken to characterize the group.[34] Barth alluded to a saying of the mountain Pathans to describe the resulting view of ethnic group membership: 'He is Pathan who *does* Pashto, not (merely) who *speaks* Pashto.'[35] One might say that the populist turn shifted the focus of the Dravidian movement from '*speaking Tamil/being* Dravidian') to '*doing* Tamil/Dravidian' from a jealous guardianship of ethnic boundaries defined by putative ancestry to a valorization of 'plebeian' norms. The DMK sought to imbue public culture with the idioms of the intermediate strata, and criticized the aloofness of the post-colonial state from these groups.[36] It altered the Tamil language of popular usage by drawing upon the dialects of the intermediate castes and distributed patronage more directly to these groups. While using ethnic appeals in opposition to the national government and the pan-Indianists, the DMK did not cultivate animosity towards the out-groups of early Dravidianism (Brahmins and North Indians). Such a cultural politics enabled the inclusion of immigrants immersed in indigenous popular culture within the popular community and implicitly placed at its margins many 'non-Brahmin' Tamils—the

[34] Frederik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1969); Stanley J. Tambiah, 'Ethnic Conflict in the World Today', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1989, pp. 335–49; Donand Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 41–74; Henri Tajfel (ed.), *Soçial Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[35] Ibid., p. 119.

[36] Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy*, pp. 297–305; Marguerite R. Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, pp. 239–310; Sumathi Ramaswamy, 'En/gendering Language: The Poetics and Politics of Tamil Identity, 1891–1970' (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Ph.D. dissertation, 1992); C. N. Annadurai, *Panaththottam*.

anglicized, core Congress supporters, and those who used a Sanskritic idiom.[37]

EMERGENCE OF DIVERSE POPULISMS

Two streams emerged within Dravidian populism by the 1960s, which I call *assertive populism* and *paternalist populism*.[38] They became institutionally distinct with the formation of the ADMK in 1972. While assertive populism has been associated with the DMK and paternalist populism with the ADMK, these types of mass politics have emerged in many other regions too.

Assertive populism urges its supporters towards militant action to open up hitherto restricted spheres. When it rules, it typically creates entitlements to education, jobs, loans, and subsidized producer goods and, less often, to small amounts of property (for example, housing or land). Due to the scarcity of such goods, they are usually rationed (for example through preferential policies) but not granted freely to all. Groups with modest social power are best able to compete for such entitlements and so are the movement's key supporters. This is especially true of the petty intelligentsia—those drawn from groups with a limited history of education who have or aspire to modest white collar employment—which stands to gain most from the preferential policies which assertive populists typically institute.

Links with the petty intelligentsia incline assertive populism towards militancy. The petty intelligentsia has a strong affinity with language politics in colonial and post-colonial contexts as the elite intelligentsia has greater facility in the language of privilege, that of the (former) colonizers.[39] It has also voiced revivalist calls

[37] The use of Sanskritic Tamil is considered suspect by most Dravidianists as it is associated with orthodox Brahmins, and the north Indian languages (unlike Tamil) have strong Sanskritic roots.

[38] For other typologies of populism, see Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism*; J. B. Allcock, 'Populism: A Brief Biography', *Sociology*, vol. 5, September 1971), pp. 371–87; Gino Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978); and Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

[39] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), pp. 97–8; Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, p. 221; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 108–15.

on behalf of religions with deep indigenous roots in South Asia and parts of the Islamic world;[40] and promoted indigenized variants of Christianity in the Philippines and parts of Latin America.[41] When assertive populism is paired with ethnic militancy, ethnic categories highlight the distinctness of the elite against which populism mobilizes, as they did in the experiences of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union, Sinhala Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka, and the the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) in Greece.[42]

The self-willed activity of the cadre is seen as the basis of the assertive populist project and the changes it introduces in power and status. This vision legitimizes the distribution of patronage among activists and key supporters and militates against patrimonialism. Along with the modest social power of typical activists and supporters, this view enables the presence of significant cadre and supporter autonomy, which might be used at critical points to split the party.

[40] The petty intelligentsia has been at the forefront of Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh revivalism. See Martin Marty and Scott Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Shireen T. Hunter (ed.), *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism: Diversity and Unity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); Nikki R. Keddie (ed.), *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972); Kenneth Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Tapan Basu, P. K. Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen *Khakhi Shorts and Saffron Flags*, Stanley Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[41] Richard L. Deats, *Nationalism and Christianity in the Philippines* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1968); Daniel Levine (ed.), *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

[42] These movements and the APRA in Peru had many other typical assertive populist characteristics also, at least through some phases. J. D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliiski and the Bulgarian National Union, 1899–1928* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); Nicos Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialization in Latin America and the Balkans* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 35–8; Stanley Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?*, Jonathan Spencer, *Sri Lanka: History and Roots of Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1990); Christos Lyrintzis, *The Power of Populism*; Steve Stein, *Populism in Peru: The Emergence of the Masses and the Politics of Social Control* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).

Paternalist populism involves the idea of a benevolent leader, party, or state providing those with little social power protection from repressive elites and goods for which they need not compete. It provides subsidized wage goods, which the lower strata and women usually find most appealing as these groups are often unable to assert themselves independently or compete for the more substantial benefits which assertive populism typically provides. Supporters are encouraged to assume an attitude of reverence and gratitude towards the party, its leader, and the state, depicted in the manner of a traditional patron. So, paternalist populism does not strike directly at social deference. Its focus on the charismatic leader brings with it a weak party organization with limited autonomy for the cadre and supporters, and is compatible with patrimonialism.

The leader's charisma is however contingent on the supporters viewing him as an exemplar of the paternalist populist outlook. This requires the continued distribution of goods, to which the supporters develop a sense of being entitled. This may also give the supporters a degree of autonomy to shape some party initiatives if these initiatives are presented as part of the paternalist agenda. Further, the prior strength of civil society may force paternalist leaders to transact with autonomous associations.[43] Paternalist populism has no affinity with ethnic militancy, but ethnic notions may be used to highlight the leader's affinity with the lower strata, as did Sanchez Cerro in Peru and Peron in Argentina, and to augment the prestige of the patron-state, as in the experience of the Mexican Partide Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).[44]

[43] Tocqueville's concept of democratic despotism and Marx's discussion of Louis Bonaparte's regime were the first sustained accounts of phenomena akin to paternalist populism. Their suggestion that such political forces would be necessarily associated with atomized groups and a poorly organized society was, however, misleading.

[44] These political forces exhibited many other paternalist populist features too, at least through some phases, as did Vargas and Brizola in Brazil and the Indian Congress party and the Pakistan People's Party in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Michael Coniff (ed.), *Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Steve Stein *Populism in Peru*; Michael Coniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil: The Rise of Populism, 1925–1945* (Albuguergue: University of New Mexico Press, 1981); Frederick C. Turner and Jose Enrique Miguens (eds), *Juan Peron and the Reshaping of Argentina* (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 1983); Frederick C. Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University

The DMK's roots among the intermediate strata, especially the petty intelligentsia,[45] its focus on policies appealing to these groups such as the intermediate caste quotas, and its militant language and autonomist demands identify it as an assertive populist. In keeping with this characterization, the DMK has had a strong party organization, its leaders were unable to designate their successors, and its cadre and supporters used the significant autonomy they enjoyed to shape the initiatives of the local party units and effect two significant splits.

The groups that occupied the apex of local DMK subcultures often oriented the initiatives of the local party unit. In the plains regions of Tamil Nadu, where stratification was rather loose and many from the intermediate castes enjoyed significant power, the DMK became a vehicle for these groups. In some of the valley regions, where the society was more polarized and some of the intermediate castes shared with the lower castes a condition of ritual exclusion, the party initially associated itself with the concerns of these groups to overcome their social marginality.[46]

The promises that MGR's films offered of protection for women and the poor, the ADMK's focus on policies such as the free lunch scheme to fulfill these promises,[47] and the massive

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of North Carolina Press, 1968); Douglas Madsen and Peter G. Snow, *The Charismatic Bond: Political Behavior in Times of Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 66–91.

[45] The conclusions regarding the social and geographical bases of partisanship are based on the ecological analysis of electoral data and case studies of mobilization and competition in five representative state Legislative Assembly constituencies.

[46] The findings regarding local variations in DMK mobilization are based on the case studies of Royapuram, Tiruvannamalai, and Mannargudi (and some adjoining parts of Thanjavur district). For a detailed account of the DMK, see Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy*, pp. 145–334.

[47] Sara Dickey, 'The Politics of Adulation: Cinema and the Production of Politicians in South India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 52, no. 2, May 1993, pp. 340–72; Sara Dickey, *Cinema and the Urban Poor in South India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); M. S. S. Pandian, *The Image Trap*, Barbara Harriss, *Meals and Noon Meals in South India: Food and Nutrition Policy in the Rural Food Economy of Tamil Nadu State* (Madras, 1986).

support the party got from women and the poor identify the ADMK as a paternalist populist force. The party's abandonment of the DMK's appeals to caste identity and militant demands regarding language policy and state autonomy are congruous with this understanding, as are the control the leader exercised over a somewhat weak party, the ready transfer of his charisma to his lover after his death, and the inability of dissidents to effect significant and enduring splits.

Prior civil society strength forced party leaders to grant concessions to independent associations of castes and farmers, and gave supporters some autonomy to appropriate the ADMK banner in local contention. Thus, popular pressure urged the ADMK to abandon efforts to modify the basis of the preferential quotas, and traditional fishermen used the party's banner in their conflicts with owners of motorized boats, as did urban squatter groups to deter police bulldozers.[48]

Role of Flexibility and Autonomy in the Two Major Turns

Flexibility and autonomy crucially aided the two major changes in movement trajectory. Cadre autonomy enabled the growth of factions with an alternative strategic perspective within the wombs of the parent parties prior to the two major splits. Supporter autonomy helped these factions gain popularity, which won them the temporary and grudging tolerance of flexible party leaders. The populist outlook developed within the DK fold from the late 1930s to the late 1940s, even while the leader harped on exclusionary ethnic appeals. The populist faction dominated the youth wing of the DK, its leaders aired their alternative perspective in journals, which they edited, and various party fora, and were able to force the DK leader to formalize the party's organizational structure before they formed the DMK. Similarly, a paternalist populist sub-culture developed within the DMK fold from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, around widespread adulation for MGR, who later founded the ADMK. It was a major source of electoral

[48] These instances of supporter autonomy come from my case studies of Royapuram and Dindigul. Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity, Populism, and Pluralist Democracy*, pp. 335–439 provides an extended analysis of the ADMK.

support, without which the DMK could not have come to power in the 1960s. This subculture took the organizational form of MGR's fan clubs, which were loosely affiliated with the DMK and served as a haven of dissent within the party. In both cases, the emergence of party factions and party-affiliated associations oriented to the new strategic perspective within the parent party provided the new parties a sound organizational base at the outset.

While cadre autonomy and flexibility enabled the formation of new parties, supporter autonomy and the adoption of a new strategy helped these parties become popular soon after they were formed. The DMK took with it the lion's share of the DK's former members and supporters when it was formed in 1949, became popular rapidly among the intermediate strata in the 1950s and among other groups too in the 1960s, and assumed power in the state within eighteen years of its formation. The ADMK attracted only about 10 per cent of the DMK's former members and a smaller proportion of its leaders at all levels when it was formed. But, it gained massive support both from those who had been attracted to the DMK through the 1960s by the party's nascent paternalist appeals and among the many disenchanted with the declining pan-Indianist parties. The ADMK has won all general elections to the state assembly held since its formation, except in 1989 when it was temporarily split after MGR's death.

The Benign Consequences of the Two Major Turns

The two major changes in movement trajectory were conducive to the emergence of four desirable outcomes—sustained tolerance and contestation, pluralism, and the increased representation of emergent groups. The four variables of movement–society interaction produced the four benign outcomes in two ways—directly and indirectly—by inducing the two changes in movement trajectory.

Both changes in movement trajectory tempered the chauvinism of some of the movement's initial appeals. While the populist turn reduced antagonism towards ethnic out-groups, the emergence of paternalist populism dampened ethnic militancy further, particularly reducing conflicts with the national government. These changes were highlighted by the failure of the nativist calls that the DMK leaders raised in the early to mid-1970s to discredit MGR

in view of his non-Tamil origins.[49] Nativism evoked little support even among core DMK supporters as they had become oriented to the revaluation of popular Tamil culture, in which MGR was a major figure. So far had the DMK's populism shifted the focus of mass sentiments away from policing ethnic boundaries that the DMK leaders could not themselves draw on ethnic antagonisms when they wanted. The failure of the DMK's nativist gamble deterred any such future efforts, and the ADMK provided an alternative for those with strong attachments to both Tamil and pan-Indian identities. Even the growth of the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka in the 1980s has not revived opposition to ethnic out-groups.[50] Indeed, MGR's lover and successor, J. Jayalalitha, who is a Brahmin of arguably non-Tamil descent, ruled Tamil Nadu from 1991 to 1996, and returned to power recently in 2001.

Although the two changes in movement trajectory tempered ethnic militancy, they did not undermine the ability of Dravidianism to 'immunize' Tamil society, so to speak, against Hindu revivalism. This was because this 'immunization effect' was not based on widespread opposition to the Hindu religion or North Indians. Rather, assertive Dravidianism inhibited Hindu revivalist growth because it gave non-Hindus an important role in its vision of community and valorized norms diametrically opposed to those upheld by the Hindu revivalists—the culture of the intermediate castes, rather than the Sanskritized upper castes; and notions of Tamil cultural specificity and pride, rather than of Indian cultural homogeneity. Assertive Dravidianism also prevented the growth of religious revivalism by promoting cooperation across religious lines, which did not decline with the DMK's ethnic militancy.

The existence of two variants of Dravidian populism, embodied in two parties (with different but partly overlapping social bases) competing to dominate state politics, put greater pressure on both parties to deliver on their promises and respond to the ways in

[49] MGR was a 'non-Brahmin' Malayali and thus within the scope of the broader definition of the Dravidian as a non-Brahmin South Indian, but this definition did not find popular acceptance.

[50] Stanley Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986); G. Palanithurai and K. Mohanasundaram, *Dynamics of Tamil Nadu Politics in Sri Lankan Ethnicity* (Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1993); K. R. Narayan Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1994).

which autonomous supporters interpreted these promises. It thus increased accountability and pluralism, and reconciled Dravidianist dominance with vigorous electoral competition and sustained contestation.

Dimensions of Party–Society Relations: A Comparative Perspective

Flexibility, autonomy, and prior civil society strength produced pluralist outcomes in the Dravidianist case because the cadre and supporters used their autonomy to appropriate ethnic appeals, which initially had exclusionary overtones, in a tolerant manner. A contrast with the experiences of Hindu revivalism and Sinhala Buddhist revivalism highlights the specific roles of these variables.

Hindu revivalist organizations have lacked strategic flexibility and, for the most part, cadre autonomy.[51] Movement leaders have propagated visions of an integral Hindu community conceived mainly in terms of the norms and idioms of the landholding and mercantile castes of northern and western India, the movement's main early supporters, and in opposition to the adherents of religions of foreign advent, particularly the Muslims.[52] While seeking to include all other Hindus and claiming to embrace others who derive their sense of identity from their roots in South Asian soil, they have lacked the flexibility needed to appeal to these groups in their idiom. So they remain mired in antagonism towards non-Hindus and sometimes the lower and intermediate Hindu castes, and their support remains concentrated in the regions (see Table 13.6) and among groups which provided them their early support. The rather strict socialization of cadre in the political vision which dominates the movement has impeded the emergence of a movement offshoot addressing the inclinations of a broad section of the public towards tolerant visions of Hindu identity. While some of the Hindu revivalist organizations which have

[51] For evidence of the recent emergence of cadre autonomy in a Hindu revivalist women's organization, see Tanika Sarkar, 'The Rashtrasevika Samiti and Ramjanmabhoomi', in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindus and Others*, pp. 24–45. This is however an exception to the general rule.

[52] Tapan Basu *et al.*, *Khakhi Shorts and Saffron Flags*; Bruce D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

emerged over the last three decades (notably the Vishva Hindu Parishad) have adopted methods of mobilization that have attracted the participation of larger numbers, they have upheld the same norms and opposed the same groups that older movement organizations have.[53] Aside from instigating religious riots throughout the century, the Hindu revivalists have disrupted or forcibly taken over trade unions, student unions, debating societies, theatre troupes, festival organizing committees, and institutions which publish school textbooks.[54]

TABLE 13.6: Hindu Revivalists' Share of the Valid Vote (in per cent)[1]

Year	India	Region	
		North/West	South/East
1952	5.9	8.6	2.4
1957	7.2	11.3	1.7
1962	7.7	12.8	0.9
1967	9.4	15.4	1.4
1971	7.4	15.9	1.0
1984	7.4	14.5	1.0
1989	11.6	19.3	1.8
1991	21.0	31.1	10.2

[1] Compiled from the same sources as Table 13.6 and figures omitted for the1977 and 1980 elections for the same reason. 'North/West' includes the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. 'South/East' includes the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengla, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh, and the union territories of Pondicherry and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

[53] This is partly because the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was the primary source from which the later organizations drew their ideological inspiration and many key leaders, and remains the ultimate arbiter of disputes within the Hindu revivalist 'family'. Tapan Basu *et al.*, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*; Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindus and Others*. For a different interpretation, see Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Strategic Syncretism in Ideology Building', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 28, nos 12 and 13, March 1993, pp. 517–24.

[54] Sikh militants have similarly undermined various civic fora.

By contrast, the Dravidianist parties not only propagated diverse visions of the Dravidian community, the later born ADMK dominated regions (see Table 13.7) and attracted considerable support among groups which had extended limited support to the DMK. The Dravidianists rose to dominance even outside their initial support bases (that is, beyond the northern plains and the central valley), unlike the Hindu revivalists, because flexibility and autonomy were present in the former case and not the latter. While prior civil society strength reinforced flexibility and cadre autonomy in Tamil Nadu, it does not by itself account for the divergent trajectories of Dravidianism and Hindu revivalism. Ethnic movements with little flexibility and autonomy can undermine previously autonomous civic activity, as they did in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, the birthplace of both the most influential and the most intolerant Hindu revivalist organizations (the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Shiv Sena respectively).[55] So, the maintenance of pluralism should be traced to party–society relations, not just to the history of civic life.[56]

While Sinhala Buddhist revivalism has combined ethnic and populist features, much as Dravidianism has, it has not been characterized by flexibility. The cadre have enjoyed some autonomy in the organizations committed to Sinhala Buddhist revivalism, but their socialization within these organizations has been such that they have used this autonomy only to accentuate the majoritarian impulsions of the leaders. Thus, a militant cleric assassinated the leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, who had been elected on a Sinhala revivalist wave, when he seemed willing to bargain away some pro-Sinhala measures in the late 1950s; and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna re-emerged in the 1980s to exert pressure on the government to persist in its majoritarian policies in the face of the Tamil guerilla movement and India's armed

[55] Walter Andersen and Shridhar Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1987); Jayant Lele, 'Saffronisation of Shiv Sena: Political Economy of City, State and Nation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 30, no. 25, 24 June 1995, pp. 1520–8; Mary F. Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979).

[56] This distinguishes my account from Robert Putnam *Making Democracy Work*.

TABLE 13.7: Ligislative Assembly Elections, Tamil Nadu State: Key Parties' Share of the Valid Vote in Crucial Elections in the State's Major Ecological Zones (in percent)[1]

Zone	Party Congress	DMK	ADMK
1. Election year: 1962			
Northern Plains	43.8	35.6	–
Central Valley	47.3	28.8	–
Western Plains	48.7	16.3	–
Southern Plains	48.0	20.1	–
Southern Valley	40.0	15.0	–
Deep South	49.4	8.2	–
2. Election year: 1977			
Northern Plains	13.6	27.9	33.0
Central Valley	26.3	33.8	29.6
Western Plains	17.0	22.8	34.7
Southern Plains	21.9	18.5	31.1
Southern Valley	27.7	13.4	29.5
Deep South	18.8	15.0	27.7
3. Election year: 1984			
Northern Plains	17.3	34.8	36.2
Central Valley	16.1	27.1	36.6
Western Plains	11.0	26.6	45.1
Southern Plains	18.2	22.3	33.3
Southern Valley	9.8	33.8	46.8
Deep South	15.2	24.5	30.8
4. Election year: 1989			
Northern Plains	18.2	36.7	30.2
Central Valley	19.7	34.1	28.0
Western Plains	18.6	22.8	33.5
Southern Plains	24.0	30.5	30.8
Southern Valley	23.4	25.7	35.6
Deep South	25.5	29.6	27.3

[1] Complied from data disks supplied by Tamil Nadu Election Commission.

intervention in Sri Lanka's ongoing ethnic conflict.[57] The case of Sinhala Buddhist revivalism shows that neither cadre autonomy nor a populist articulation of ethnic appeals ensure a pluralist course unless strategic flexibility enables the emergence of tolerant ethnic conceptions within the movement fold. Otherwise, populist outrage at being marginalized may only reinforce the strident assertion of ethnic pride, as it did not only in Sri Lanka but also in Malaysia, Fiji, and Uganda.[58]

The foregoing comparative discussion illustrates how different dimensions of party–society relations shape the courses of ethnic movements and underlines the need to give these factors greater emphasis in political sociology.

Political Competition and Transformation of the Party System

[57] Stanley Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?*; James Manor, *The Expedient Utopian* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Rohan Gunaratna, *Sri Lanka: A Lost Revolution? The Inside Story of the JVP* (Colombo: Institute of Fundamental Studies, 1990).

[58] R. S. Milne, *Politics in Ethnically Bipolar States*; Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

PART V

Political Competition and Transformation of the Party System

14

Parties and the Party System+

James Manor

Political systems in which diverse parties compete freely for mass electoral support are increasingly hard to find in the less developed nations, even in those that experienced British rule—for a long time thought to yield durable systems of liberal, representative government. But India, after nearly four decades of self-government and eight general elections, and despite hair-raising traumas and persisting threats to open, competitive politics, still qualifies. Nevertheless, in recent years, decay within parties and increasingly destructive conflict among parties have so eroded the strength of the open political system that its survival is in question.

There is consequently an urgent need for rebuilding, both within individual parties and in relations among them. Since his election victory in the last week of 1984, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has begun, somewhat hesitantly, the process of rebuilding within the formal institutions of state. He has also, at least for the time being, restored a modicum of civility to relations between his ruling Congress-I party and the opposition, and this has in turn led to an improvement in relations between the central government in New Delhi and opposition-controlled governments at the state level. Rajiv Gandhi has also indicated, through scorching criticisms, that he is well aware of the wretched condition of his own party.[1] But he may also have missed his opportunity to rebuild it. If that is indeed true, then he could eventually experience the kind of vulnerability that caused him and his mother before

+ Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy: Changing State-Society Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[1] *The Times of India* (Delhi), 29 December 1985, and *The Times* (London), 30 December 1985.

him to seek all-out confrontation with opposition parties. It could even lead civilian élites to abandon hope in parties and in open, competitive politics.

This paper seeks to delineate the changes that have occurred within India's parties, especially the Congress party, and within the party system since Independence, and to explain how forces within the sphere of party competition have contributed to those changes. For a full understanding of how all of this came about, it will be necessary to look beyond that limited sphere.

At first glance, it may seem that few dramatic changes have actually occurred within and among India's parties. It may appear that the victory of the Congress party in the 1984 general election closely resembles all but one of those that have come before—the aberration being 1977—and that one need only dust off and update the classic studies of the party system that Rajni Kothari and W. H. Morris-Jones produced some years ago.[2] To adopt that view, however, is to overlook a number of basic changes in Indian politics over the last two decades that have substantially altered conditions within parties, relations among parties, and, partly because parties have provided the main links between state and society, state–society relations. Some of these changes were disguised by the result of the 1984 election, but they remain realities nonetheless.

To emphasize the changes that have taken place, this paper is divided into four sections that deal with the three main phases in the evolution of India's parties and party systems—the periods from 1947 to 1960, from 1967 to 1977, and from 1977 to 1984—and the year following the election in the last week of 1984. It is not yet clear whether this last period should be seen as a fourth distinct phase in the process, but enough has changed since the election to justify a separate discussion.

[2] Rajni Kothari, 'The Congress System in India', *Asian Survey*, December 1964, pp. 1161–73, much of which was foreshadowed in his 'Form and Substance in Indian Politics', *Economic Weekly*, April–May 1961, pp. 846–63; W. H. Morris-Jones, 'Parliament and Dominant Party: The Indian Experience', and 'Dominance and Dissent: Their Inter-relations in the Indian Party System', in W. H. Morris-Jones, *Politics Mainly Indian* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1978), pp. 196–232. Both Kothari and Morris-Jones provided helpful suggestions during the preparation of this paper. I am also grateful to Stanley A. Kochanek for many useful comments on the initial draft.

FROM 1947 TO 1967

To understand India's parties and party system from Independence in 1947 to 1967, just after Indira Gandhi first became prime minister and the year of the fourth general election, we can do no better than to turn to the accounts that Kothari and Morris-Jones have provided. Their views are sufficiently similar, though they are developed independently, to be considered together here. They described a 'dominant party system', that is, a multi-party system, in which free competition among parties occurred but in which the Indian National Congress enjoyed a dominant position, both in terms of the number of seats that it held in Parliament in New Delhi and the state legislative assemblies, and in terms of its immense organizational strength outside the legislatures. It is extremely important that we recognize that the Congress was dominant in both spheres. Indeed, it was its dominance at the organizational level that was more important, for on that rested its legislative superiority. The might, the reach, and the subtlety of its organization also enabled it to dominate the actions of bureaucrats who were charged with the implementation of policies and laws at regional and, especially, at subregional levels.

In this first period, India had a party system characterizéd by 'dominance coexisting with competition but without a trace of alternation',[3] because opposition parties had little hope of preventing the Congress from obtaining sizable majorities in the legislatures despite the ruling party's failure on most occasions to gain a majority of the valid votes cast. Neither, by and large, did opposition parties share power in coalitions with the Congress at the state level. So here was a 'competitive party system... in which the competing parts play rather dissimilar roles'. The ruling Congress party was 'a party of consensus' and the opposition parties were 'parties of pressure'.[4] That is to say, the opposition parties played a role that was 'quite distinctive.... Instead of providing an alternative to the Congress party, they function by influencing sections within the Congress. They oppose by making Congressmen oppose. Groups within the ruling party assume the role of

[3] Morris-Jones, 'Dominance and Dissent', op. cit., p. 217.
[4] Kothari, 'The Congress "System"', op. cit., p. 1162.

opposition parties, often quite openly, reflecting the ideologies and interests of other parties. The latter influence political decision-making at the margin'.[5]

In other words, there was 'a most important "openness" in the relations between Congress and the other parties...a positive communication and interaction between them'. This meant that the main hope that opposition leaders had of exercising political influence was to 'address themselves...to like-minded...groups in the dominant party'.[6] Those efforts by opposition groups generated ideas and pressure within the ruling party's organization, which was sophisticated enough to detect them and communicate them upward to the leaders who could respond to them.[7]

These comments begin to reveal the extraordinary dimensions of Congress dominance in that period. It was within the Congress, and not between the Congress and the opposition parties, that the major conflicts within Indian politics occurred.[8] It was within the Congress that nearly all of the groups that mattered in Indian politics could be found. The party possessed a large number of skilled operatives who were able to arrange bargains between important social groups, to interpret the logic of politics at one level of the system to people at higher and lower levels, and to knit together the varied regions and subcultures of the subcontinent. The Congress organization was also the main instrument that knit together state and society, which is to say that it was India's central integrating institution.[9] As a consequence, one did not find in India, as in the West, 'a relationship between the government and the party organization in which the latter plays an instrumental and subsidiary role'.[10] Congress was more important than that, and arguably more important than all of the formal institutions of the state put together.

[5] Kothari, 'Form and Substance', op. cit., p. 849.

[6] Morris-Jones, 'Dominance and Dissent', op. cit., p. 218.

[7] Kothari, 'The Congress System', op. cit., p. 1163, and Morris-Jones, 'Parliament', op. cit., pp. 207–8.

[8] Kothari, 'The Congress "System"', op. cit., p. 1163.

[9] I have set this argument out more fully in two articles: 'Indira and After: The Decay of Party Organization in India', *The Round Table*, October 1978, pp. 315–24; and 'Party Decay and Political Crisis in India', *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 1981), pp. 25–40.

[10] Kothari, 'The Congress "System"', op. cit., p. 1162.

The Congress occupied not only the broad centre of the political spectrum, but most of the left and right as well. This relegated the opposition parties not only to the margins of the Congress, but to the margins of the political and party systems as well. To make matters worse, these parties often found themselves on opposite sides of the Congress, which killed any hope of their making common cause against it.[11] To save themselves from absorption by or the loss of defectors to the Congress, opposition parties tended to develop rigorous ideologies and tightly disciplined organizations.

The Congress was able to maintain its position as a party occupying most of the space in the political system because 'there [was] plurality within the dominant party which [made] it more representative, [provided] flexibility, and [sustained] internal competition. At the same time, it [was] prepared to absorb groups and movements from outside the party and thus prevent other parties from gaining strength'.[12] The task of creating and sustaining the immensely broad Congress coalition in that first phase was, at least in the view of Morris-Jones, facilitated by the complexities and ambiguities of Indian society, which prevented polarization (in class terms or any other terms) and the formation of contradictions that might fracture such an all-embracing alliance of interests. This insight differs from but complements Myron Weiner's argument that the task of building the Congress coalition was eased by traditional values and roles of conciliation that Congressmen astutely took up,[13] and the Rudolphs' contention that traditional elements of the caste system assisted the development of modern, representative politics in India.[14]

But however much the social background may have helped, and however important the role of the Congress in the winning of independence may have been in placing the party in a dominant position in the first place, the survival of Congress dominance

[11] Morris-Jones, 'Dominance and Dissent', op. cit., pp. 219–20.

[12] Kothari, 'The Congress "System"', op. cit., pp. 1164–5.

[13] Myron Weiner, 'Traditional Role Performance and The Development of Modern Political Parties: The Indian Case', *Journal of Politics*, November 1964, pp. 830–49.

[14] Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 1.

depended on the efficient functioning of the party organization. Of crucial importance was its effectiveness in distributing the resources, which it acquired from its control of state power, among existing and potential clients in exchange for their political support. This management of resources, at which many within the Congress organization excelled, was essential to the proper functioning of the 'conciliation machinery within the Congress, at various levels and for different tasks, which [was] almost constantly in operation, mediating in factional disputes, influencing political decisions in the States and districts'.[15]

The same skill at allotting patronage also enabled the Congress to co-opt and absorb within itself groups whose grievances had 'been ventilated through agitations launched by the opposition parties'. This was reinforced by Congress' 'policy of neutralizing some of the more important sources of cleavage and disaffection' and by the leadership's tendency 'to preserve democratic forms, to respect the rule of law, to avoid undue strife', and to show 'great sensitivity on the question of respect for minorities...'.[16]

From 1967 to 1977

The second phase extended from 1967 to the defeat of the Congress party at the general election of 1977, which occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Emergency. It is of course possible to see the Emergency, which extended over nineteen months from 26 June 1975, as a separate phase in this story. But a paper-length study cannot do justice to a more elaborate disaggregation. It is nevertheless worth noting that the Emergency constituted both an intensification of certain trends from the period between 1969 and 1975 and, at the same time, something of a hiatus between phases two and three, during which opposition leaders were jailed, the party system and open politics were closed down, even Congress leaders were intimidated, and Mrs Gandhi attempted, only partly successfully, to centralize power within the ruling party.

Some of the earliest and most perceptive comments on the party system between 1967 and 1977 came from studies by Morris-Jones

[15] Kothari, 'The Congress "System"', op. cit., p. 1168.
[16] Ibid., pp. 1168–70.

and Kothari after the 1967 general election, which occasioned important changes.[17] One important feature of the old system that persisted was, in Kothari's words, 'the central role of the Congress in maintaining and restructuring political consensus'. But he also argued that:

> The socio-economic and demographic profile of the polity is changing rather fast....The mobilization of new recruits and groups into the political process...has given rise to the development of new and more differentiated identities and patterns of political cleavage...[This gave rise to] the expectation of freer political access...and a greater insistence on government performance. Intermediaries and vote banks, while of continuing importance, have become increasingly circumvented as citizens search for more effective participation in the political market place and develop an ability to evaluate and make choices.[18]

As a result, 'the dominant party model has started to give way to a more differentiated structure of party competition...'.[19]

Morris-Jones also emphasized the emergence of 'a market polity' in India. This was, of course, nothing very new. 'There was plenty of competition and bargaining before 1967...,' but it had taken place 'largely within the Congress, between groups and in semi-institutionalized form'.[20] In the 1967 election, however, which saw the Congress lose power in six states, the competition had grown too severe to be contained by the party's internal bargaining, so that 'dissident Congressmen played an important role in the weakening of the party...in perhaps every "lost" State except Tamil Nadu'.[21] This brought a number of opposition parties fully into the market place, and competition that had previously occurred within the Congress was now brought into the realm of inter-party conflict. Competition also increased inasmuch as opposition parties formed coalition governments in every state they

[17] Kothari, 'Continuity and Change in the Indian Party System', *Asian Survey*, November 1970, pp. 937–48; and Morris-Jones, 'From Monopoly to Competition in India's Politics', in Morris-Jones, *Politics Mainly Indian*, op. cit., pp. 144–59.

[18] Kothari, 'Continuity and Change', op. cit., p. 939.

[19] Ibid. Morris-Jones also noted that 'the market of politics has expanded by the participation of new groups in government', Morris Jones, 'From Monopoly to Competition', op. cit., p. 156.

[20] Morris-Jones, 'From Monopoly to Competition', op. cit., p. 154.

[21] Ibid.

controlled except Tamil Nadu, and 'coalition governments are themselves small markets'.[22]

The 1967 election also made Centre–state relations an important feature of inter-party competition. Bargaining had long been an important element of relations between New Delhi and the states, even in Nehru's days when Congressmen held sway at both levels. After Nehru's death, the power of the state-level Congress leaders had become both greater and more apparent. The 1967 election created conditions in which quite serious conflict might have arisen between the Centre and the states, but, thanks mainly to the finesse of Union Home Minister Y. B. Chavan, this did not occur.[23]

Another new phenomenon after 1967 was a 'pretty regular and continuous "defector market"'.[24] It is easy to forget that this was so, for our minds tend to rush onward to the dramatic splitting of the Congress in 1969 and Mrs Gandhi's subsequent surprises, which gained her the political initiative and the great election victory of 1971. But defection was an important element in the aftermath of the 1967 election, and two points should be made about it. First, defectors flowed both ways, both into and out of the Congress. More flowed out, however, than in, causing the fall of Congress governments in three states.[25] Second, the highly disciplined, ideologically oriented parties of the Marxist left and the Hindu chauvinist right remained almost entirely immune to this new trend. (The Communists experienced a split over ideological issues in 1969, but that was different from defection.)

In other words, the parties to the far right and left tended to remain 'hard' in that they retained tough shells through which people did not pass in and out, and in that they maintained their organizational integrity through centralization, discipline, and ideological consistency. They also retained narrower social bases than most of the other parties in that period and narrower bases than the Communist Party of India-(Marxist) [CPI(M)] and the Jana Sangh/Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have developed in the post-1977 years. They nonetheless moved very cautiously along

[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., p. 153.
[24] Ibid., p. 155.
[25] Ibid., and Kothari 'Continuity and Change', op. cit., p. 946.

the road to more moderate policies, a road down which, as Stanley A. Kochanek observed, other opposition parties were motoring once the possibility of power presented itself.[26]

The 1967 election had created a situation in which the Congress 'dominance was strikingly diminished' because its 'performance in the art of governance was subjected to harsh judgment by supporters and opposition alike'.[27] It was a situation marked by 'ambiguity, blurred lines, flexibility and flux…', but this was not seen to represent disintegration. Indeed, the actors in the system had adjusted with such 'amazingly little difficulty' that 'the stability of the regime appears more assured than ever before'. This was true because the regime had, among other things, 'moved away from any degree of dependence of one outstanding leader'. If this raised questions about the need for 'clarity and firmness of decision', it was reassuring inasmuch as decisions 'also require reconciliation of very varied interests if they are to succeed'.[28]

The schism in the Congress in 1969 was a major shock to the political system in India. Partly as a result, Mrs Gandhi's version of the party faced a largely united opposition in the general election of 1971. B. D. Graham has compared the polarization of India's parties into something close to two opposing blocks in 1971 (and 1977) to a few key elections in the Third French Republic when similar polar blocs emerged. This did not occur often in France, but when it did, it indicated that a 'crisis of regime' had developed and that the two blocs were disputing fundamental issues about the nature of the political order.[29] Mrs Gandhi's decision to split her country's central political institution produced such conditions, in India in 1971, conditions that altered the shape of the party system at that election. This happened again in 1977 when the threat to all liberal institutions created a widely shared perception that a

[26] Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 446.

[27] Kothari, 'Continuity and Change', op. cit., p. 947.

[28] Morris-Jones 'From Monopoly to Competition', op. cit., pp. 158–9. Kothari was slightly less optimistic than Morris-Jones on this count. Ibid., p. 948.

[29] I am grateful to B. D. Graham for bringing his argument to my attention in numerous conversations. See also B. D. Graham, 'Theories of the French Party System under the Third Republic', *Political Studies*, February 1964, pp. 21–32.

'crisis of regime' had occurred. Such perceptions did not arise among most opposition leaders in 1980, as I have argued elsewhere, or in 1984.[30]

Mrs Gandhi's victory in the 1971 election made it appear, in words Morris-Jones used soon afterwards, that 'the end of the dominant party had been too readily proclaimed in 1967' and that 'now it is back'. 'This led him naturally to expect that the opposition parties would be 'forced to operate less by confrontation than by interaction with segments of the centre mass'.[31] They were not, however, given many opportunities for interaction by the new Congress. Mrs Gandhi adopted a more confrontational posture, both towards opposition parties at the national level and towards opposition-controlled governments in various states.[32] She also took a more aggressive line with her own party, and this soon produced what Kochanek has rightly called 'a new political process' as the prime minister created 'a pyramidical decision-making structure in party and government'. Although this 'prevented threats to her personal power, it tended to centralize decision making, weaken institutionalization, and create an overly personalized regime. Moreover, the new political process proved unable to manage the tensions and cleavages of a heterogeneous party operating in a heterogeneous society, federally governed. A major crisis in the system followed'.[33]

The new system entailed, crucially, the abandonment of intra-party democracy, a change that has never been reversed. Positions in the Congress organization at all levels were filled by appointment from above rather than by election from below. This change caused people at all levels to tend to tell people above them what they thought those people wanted to hear, so that the organization's once formidable powers as an information-gathering

[30] James Manor, 'The Electoral Process Amid Awakening and Decay', in Peter Lyon and James Manor (eds), *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 87–116.

[31] Morris-Jones, 'From Monopoly to Competition', op. cit., p. 187.

[32] Bhagwan D. Dua, *Presidential Rule in India, 1950–1974: A Study in Crisis Politics* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1979).

[33] Stanley A. Kochanek, 'Mrs Gandhi's Pyramid: The New Congress', in Henry C. Hart (ed.), *Indira Gandhi's India* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1976), pp. 104–5.

agency soon wasted away.[34] The centralization of power within the party did not, however, mean that factionalism ceased to be a problem. Instead, partly because centralization reduced the leaders' ability to manage conflict, partly because Mrs Gandhi set leaders and factions at the regional level against one another, and partly because she had largely abandoned the use of bargaining, conflict within the organization grew more severe and dysfunctional. All of this reduced the party's ability to cope creatively or even adequately with conflicts that arose from a society facing increasing economic hardship.[35]

Not surprisingly, this created openings for the opposition, and by 1974, under 'Jayaprakash Narayan's leadership, an opposition movement had acquired real substance and momentum. Mrs Gandhi's reaction, which set the tone of relations between her Congress and nearly all opposition parties (with the exceptions of the Communist Party of India and, at times, one or the other of the two main parties in Tamil Nadu) for many years to come, was severe. As Kochanek put it: 'Dissent within the Congress, party opposition and press criticism ceased to function as thermostats measuring discontent. They were now interpreted as anti-party, anti-national, and traitorous, or even foreign-inspired.... Opposition party attempts to mobilize and express local grievances, valid or not, were perceived as law and order problems'.[36]

The opposition's response was similarly forceful and stubborn, with fasting and agitational techniques brought to the fore. Mrs Gandhi, who found herself under growing pressure from within her own party (indeed, it was thence that the main threat came in mid-1975), turned increasingly to a small circle of confidants in which her son Sanjay figured most prominently. He began to treat the opposition to the threats, smears, and organized violence that remained his trademark until his death in mid-1980.

There followed the Emergency, during which relations between the Congress and the opposition reached their nadir. Not only were opposition activists faced with imprisonment, but power within the Congress was further centralized. The organization of the Congress itself, in some regions where it provided a base for

[34] This is developed further in Manor, 'Party Decay and Political Crises', op. cit.

[35] Kochanek, 'Mrs Gandhi's Pyramid', op. cit., pp. 109–11.

[36] Ibid., p. 114.

potential rivals to Mrs Gandhi, was systematically dismantled—the most vivid example being the Maharashtra machine that had been created by Y. B. Chavan.

But the centralizing often had the opposite effect to that which was intended. It cut off still further Mrs Gandhi and her circle from reliable information from states beyond the Hindi belt, so that, for example, the chief ministers of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh were repeatedly able to submit reports of huge numbers of vasectomies, none of which had occurred. And instead of homogenizing the regions as intended, centralization made possible the assertion of their natural heterogeneity, so that they actually diverged from one another.[37] Mrs Gandhi's centralizing violated the basic logic by which India had been governed under both the Crown and Nehru's Congress. According to that logic, the influence of people at the apex of national and regional political systems penetrates down through the systems most effectively by means of compromise. Attempts to rule by diktat paradoxically weaken the centralizers, as happened to Mrs Gandhi.[38]

From 1977 to 1984

The third phase in the evolution of India's parties and party system extends from the defeat of Indira Gandhi's Congress in the election of March 1977 to the election victory of the Congress led by her son Rajiv in the last week of 1984, following her assassination. I choose the 1984 election, and not the assassination, as the end of this phase because it is only thereafter that a set of new and quite different trends emerge. The years from 1977 to 1984 were, broadly speaking, a time of abrasive conflict and bad feeling between political parties and a period marked by decay and fragmentation within parties. I will deal with all of that presently, but first it is necessary to identify several larger themes in this period of India's politics that provide the context essential to an understanding of the changes within parties and the party system.

Two great themes, which had become plainly evident before 1977 and which dominated the phase thereafter, were awakening and decay. The awakening occurred among the great mass of

[37] James Manor, 'Where Congress Survived: Five States in the Indian General Election of 1977', *Asian Survey*, August 1978, pp. 785–803.

[38] Manor, 'Party Decay and Political Crisis', op. cit.

India's voters, as people at all levels of society became increasingly aware of the logic of electoral politics, of the secrecy of the ballot, and of the notion that parties and leaders should respond to those whom they represented. It was more advanced among prosperous groups, but it also occurred among the poor.[39] As a result, disadvantaged rural dwellers largely ceased to vote according to the wishes of the landowning groups that continued to dominate life in the villages. Voters became more assertive and competitive, and their appetites for resources from politicians grew. Interest groups crystallized and came increasingly into conflict, so that it became harder to operate a political machine that could cater to every organized interest, as the Congress had very nearly done in the Nehru years. India became increasingly democratic and increasingly difficult to govern.

The second great theme that marked this period was the decay of political institutions, which is to say, a decline in the capacity of institutions to respond rationally, creatively, or even adequately to pressures from society.[40] This decay affected, both, the formal institutions of state and most political parties, including, above all, the Congress party. It was partly the result of systemic problems of ossification within the party. But it was quite substantially the result of the tendency of Indira Gandhi and her associates to centralize power and to deinstitutionalize. The awakening of the electorate and the decay of institutions combined to generate five further changes as by-products.

The first of these was a change in the way that elections are won and lost, or to put it more plainly, a change from the days before 1972, when incumbent governments at the state and national levels usually won reelection, to a period in which they usually lost.[41] This follows quite logically, for the decay of ruling parties and the

[39] See, for example, John O. Field, *Consolidating Democracy: Politicization and Partisanship in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1980), D. L. Sheth (ed.), *Citizens and Parties: Aspects of Competitive Politics in India* (Bombay: Allied, 1975).

[40] Samuel P. Huntington, 'Political Development and Political Decay', *World Politics*, April 1965, pp. 386–430.

[41] This had clearly been the predominant trend since the state assembly elections of 1972. The general election of 1984 is an exception to this pattern; it occurred under extraordinary and emotionally charged circumstances that are unlikely to occur again.

formal institutions through which they govern has meant that incumbents have been less able to respond to society at a time when the expectations and assertiveness of the electorate have increasingly demanded responses.

The second change was a marked decline in confidence in the state as an agency capable of creative social action (as opposed to an agency with the coercive power to maintain order). This occurred within the Congress led by both the Gandhis. It was demonstrated by Indira Gandhi's abandonment of reformist rhetoric in the election of 1980 and of serious attempts to create legislation for the betterment of society between 1980 and 1984, and by Rajiv Gandhi's preference for the private sector. But this decline was also observable within many opposition parties, among many intellectuals who were critical of Mrs Gandhi, and among large numbers of people in local arenas all across the subcontinent. There were exceptions—notably on the Marxist left, among certain elements of the Hindu chauvinist right, and in some parties at the regional level—but the predominant trend was nonetheless clear.

The third change, which was closely related to the second, was the tendency for society and politics to diverge. As political institutions, especially parties, became less able to respond rationally to appeals that arose from society, social groups tended to give up on politics and politicians and to turn inward, battening on parochial sentiments and whatever internal resources they possessed. This led to an increase in conflict between social groups as the social–political divergence and the decay of political institutions reduced the state's capacity to manage and defuse conflict.[42]

A fourth change entailed the blurring of the relatively clear lines that had existed between many political parties and their social bases, both at the national level and in many Indian states. This was a destabilizing, and potentially destructive, trend, particularly as the awakening of the electorate made it more important than ever that parties develop solid, clearly perceived links to social bases of manageable size.[43]

[42] See *The Times*, London, 18 May 1984. I have developed this further in *New Society*, 12 August 1982.

[43] James Manor, 'Blurring the Lines between Parties and Social Bases: Gundu Rao and the Emergence of a Janata Government in Karnataka', in John R. Wood (ed.), *State Politics in Contemporary India: Crisis or Continuity?* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1984), pp. 139–68.

The last of the five changes was a growing divergence between the logic of politics at the national level and the political logic in various state-level arenas. The most obvious sign of this was the emergence in the early 1980s of regional parties in several states. But even within the Congress party, during the Emergency, state-level units often went their own way.[44] This, like the appearance of regional opposition parties, was an unintended result of the excessive centralization of power by Mrs Gandhi.

With these themes in mind, let us now consider the third phase in the evolution of India's parties and party system. This period, from 1977 to December 1984, was marked by freer competition between political parties but also by greater instability in the party system and within many parties. It was a time characterized by abundant alternation between parties in power at the state and national levels, by continued decay and fragmentation within parties, by a tendency towards personalized control of parties or splinters by eminent and not-so-eminent politicians, and by great fluidity within the party system as factions and rumps and individuals defected or realigned themselves this way and that.

The defeat of the Congress led by Mrs Gandhi in 1977 and the election of the Janata Party—which was actually a motley coalition of parties—brought immense changes to the party system. Defeat caused the Congress to disintegrate. Some Congress activists left Mrs Gandhi because they had secretly disapproved of the Emergency, others because they had had enough of her son Sanjay's bizarre and often vicious egotism. Some believed that they could revive the 'real' Congress in the absence of its former and supposedly discredited leader, whereas others saw little reason to stay now that Congress had lost access to the political patronage that had been its life's blood.

Even before her defeat, Mrs Gandhi had imposed something very close to personal and dynastic rule on the political system and the party. Defeat only intensified this tendency within the Congress, or her version of it. At a time when so many were deserting her, her already extravagant distrust of other politicians intensified, and personal loyalty became an even more precious commodity. The reconstitution of her version of the Congress party in

[44] Manor, 'Where Congress Survived', op. cit. I have also dealt with this in 'Where the Gandhi Writ Doesn't Run', *The Economist*, 15 May 1982, pp. 55–6.

January 1978 under the label of the 'Indian National Congress-Indira', or the 'Congress-I', was emblematic of this increased personalization. As the badly divided Janata Party increasingly demonstrated its incapacity to govern satisfactorily and Mrs Gandhi's prospects improved, waves of deserters redefected back to her camp. Each wave tended to operate as a new faction in an already factionalized Congress-I, and the inability of Indira and Sanjay Gandhi to apply standards consistently to these returnees actually catalyzed further division and strife. Latecomers were sometimes humiliated or sometimes inexplicably promoted over the heads of old-loyalists. In this atmosphere, every group thought it had a chance and so remained a contentious force. This process continued even after Mrs Gandhi's return to power in January 1980 and Sanjay's death six months later.

The Janata government that held power between March 1977 and July 1979 was a hastily assembled coalition of quite different opposition groups united mainly by their opposition to Mrs Gandhi and the Emergency. Victory at the polls meant that those objectives had been realized, and the natural divisions among them then began to emerge. The Janata Party contained elements of the old Congress-O, the mainly conservative but secularist remainder of the out-faction after the 1969 Congress split. Alongside it stood the Jana Sangh, a party of the Hindu chauvinist right, whose main support came from high caste, middle-class people in the urban areas, particularly in the Hindi-speaking states of north and central India. Third was the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), mainly representing prosperous small peasant proprietors in the Hindi belt. It sought to reallocate resources away from the urban, industrial sector towards agriculture. Fourth was the Socialist Party, whose base included some of the rural poor of north India and sizable but scattered pockets of support among urban labour unions. Finally, there was the Congress for Democracy, a group led out of Mrs Gandhi's Congress after the Emergency by Jagjivan Ram, one of her most formidable ministers and the leading Scheduled Caste ('ex'-Untouchable) politician. Its support was greatest among poor, low caste rural dwellers.

Given the heterogeneous composition of the Janata Party and the fierce ambitions of its three leading figures—Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram, and BLD leader Charan Singh—it is no surprise that the government was unable to achieve much cohesion. One result

was a loosening of ties between the national and state levels within both the Janata Party and the political system. The factions that tended to dominate the Janata Party in the national Parliament were antagonistic to those that held sway in several Janata-controlled states. This antagonism set the national and state governments at loggerheads on some important questions, a trend that was reinforced by friction between the Janata regime in New Delhi and opposition-controlled governments in several other states. This made it impossible to reverse the tendency of the Indian federation to become an increasingly loose union. It was not that succession threatened national unity. That problem has always been greatly exaggerated by observers who have failed to see that insufficient solidarity exists at the state level to fuel separatism. But the threat of secession prepared the ground for further deterioration of Centre–state relations when Mrs Gandhi, returning to over-centralization after 1980, generated regional movements in reaction and then dealt even more aggressively—and unconstitutionally—with those movements when they had taken power in several states.

When the Janata government disintegrated in mid-1979, many of the elements that had formed it also splintered. This paralleled the disintegration that had occurred on the Congress side after the 1977 election, and the result was a confusing array of fragmentary parties, many of which were little more than personal cliques presided over by individual politicians. In this context, Mrs Gandhi's Congress-I appeared to be the only coherent national party—even though its own organization was in considerable disarray—and this image enabled it to take advantage of the strong popular reaction against the Janata government and win the 1980 election. The difficulties of the anti-Congress-I parties at making common cause persisted from the early 1980s through the election preparations during the third quarter of 1984. The assassination of Mrs Gandhi on 31 October 1984 seemed to ensure an emotion-based victory for her son and party, making opposition unity still more difficult to achieve.

This victory has led many observers to write off the opposition over the middle and even the long term, but such a judgment is premature, as the evidence from 1967 to 1984 shows. It should first be recalled that Mrs Gandhi appeared to be in a similarly unassailable position in 1972, and that mismanagement led her into

severe political trouble within only three years. If such errors should recur, the Indian electorate, which is even more aware and assertive today than in the early 1970s, is unlikely to be any more patient than on that occasion. Every state in India, like the nation as a whole, has now had at least one spell of non-Congress government. Opposition rule is no longer unthinkable anywhere. Misgovernment will generate a credible opposition.

Second, some opposition parties possessed greater promise and substance (real or, in some cases, potential substance) than the 1980 and 1984 election results implied. These parties retained either the support of important groups or ideological resources and respectable organizations or both. Stanley Kochanek has usefully identified four broad *tendencies* in Indian politics that unite particular elements in society around certain sets of ideas.[45] These are a communist tendency, a socialist tendency, a non-confessional rightist tendency, and a confessional rightist tendency. All of these have at times been represented by non-Congress political parties. The Congress has at times allied itself with and borrowed a limited number of ideas from the communist tendency. It has also at times moved into the territory on the political spectrum normally inhabited by the other three tendencies and in so doing has drawn support away from opposition parties there. In recent years, the socialist tendency can be said to have been somewhat in eclipse, both within the Congress and in the opposition. The main party of the non-confessional right, the Swatantra, has long since passed away, but the Congress under Indira Gandhi, and especially under her son Rajiv, has begun to give assertive expression to views associated with that tendency. We shall see presently how the parties of the confessional right and the communist left have fared in recent years and how the Congress-I has moved into the territory traditionally occupied by the former.

Let us first note, however that one other possible tendency is also unlikely to pass from the scene: that represented by the peasant proprietary group in the Hindi-speaking areas and championed by Charan Singh under various labels (Lok Dal, Bharatiya Lok Dal, Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party). Charan Singh himself is aged and infirm and unlikely to play an important role again. But this force

[45] I am grateful to Stanley A. Kochanek for suggesting this approach to me.

has sufficient cohesion to figure in future anti-Congress-I alliances unless Rajiv Gandhi's new economic policies develop in ways that attract it to his party.

We should pay particular attention to the CPI(M), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is a successor to the old Hindu chauvinist party, the Jana Sangh. These were the two most potent 'hard' parties of the late 1960s, and they are the only two opposition parties that are patently able to rejuvenate themselves by recruiting large numbers of young idealists. They have also managed to broaden their bases. This last comment may sound strange in the aftermath of the 1984 election, in which the CPI(M) lost ground in West Bengal and suffered embarrassments in Kerala, and in which the BJP was reduced to a parliamentary delegation of two. But it should be noted that the CPI(M) still came first in a solid majority of assembly segments in West Bengal, and it did so because it has managed, since coming to power there in 1977, to cultivate a solid base among the rural majority, a success managed partly because it has organizational efficiency in West Bengal that is said to surpass even that of the party in Kerala.[46] If the decay of other parties and some sort of socio-economic crisis should make it possible for the CPI(M) to extend the West Bengal model to other states—an eventuality that seems highly unlikely at present—we may look back on this acquisition of a rural base as a crucial change. The CPI(M) has also managed this broadening without ceasing to be a 'hard' party, without losing or gaining people through defections, and without suffering too much erosion of discipline or ideology. It is nonetheless more flexible and pragmatic than it used to be, as is exemplified by electoral pacts in states where it is a minor party.

The BJP presents a different picture. It remains a corporate entity of real institutional sinew and has not suffered from the drift towards personal rule that has done so much damage to many other opposition parties and, of course, to the Congress-I. And although it lost a large number of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) activists to the Congress-I during the 1984 election, it is generally agreed by most observers in India that it retained a majority of these and that many who decamped to the ruling party are likely to return, especially after Rajiv Gandhi's moves away from Hindu

[46] I base this on conversations with Thomas J. Nossiter.

chauvinism in 1985. To put that statement into perspective, it helps to recall that the RSS has no fewer than 700,000 *swayamsevak*s, or full-time activists, in the field.[47] The figure dwarfs that of any other party, including the Congress-I, which has surprisingly few people spending most of their time working for the organization. In addition, in many states, the Congress personnel are startlingly ineffective. In Karnataka, for example, the Congress president had to go outside the party to find an efficient organizing general secretary.[48] A large minority of the RSS swayamsevaks are adolescents, but many of them are capable of important political work.[49]

The BJP has not, however, remained the kind of 'hard' party that it once was and that the CPI(M) largely remains. It is far less penetrable than the other non-communist parties, but it has become less parochial and uncompromising in its tactics and ideology, and hence more porous than it used to be. It has both lost and accepted a surprising number of defectors in the last five years, and it was possible to identify a number of people during the 1984 election campaign who had one foot in the BJP and another in other non-Congress and non-communist parties, so that the boundaries between it and some other parties became slightly blurred.[50]

This political straddling is a logical result of a fundamental change of outlook among some BJP members, and a third reason why the opposition should not be written off. B. D. Graham, who knew the old Jana Sangh well, became convinced on a visit to India in mid-1984 that the BJP is a genuinely new entity, both in terms of organization—their party constitution is modelled on that of the post-1977 Janata Party rather than that of the Jana Sangh—and

[47] I am grateful to B. D. Graham for confirming reports that received in India on this matter.

[48] Interview with a high official of the Karnataka Congress-I, 8 January 1985, in Bangalore.

[49] Interview with B. D. Graham, London, 8 February 1985.

[50] Widespread RSS support for the Congress-I became apparent from numerous interviews with BJP and Congress-I activists in several Indian states during December 1984 and January 1985. See also *The Times of India* (Delhi), 23 December 1984; the report from Ambala in *The Hindustan Times* (Delhi), 14 December 1984; and the discussion of the open letter by veteran RSS leader Nanaji Deshmukh offering support to the prime minister in *The Indian Express*, Bombay, 26 January 1985.

in terms of ideas. BJP views on economic issues are less market-oriented than social democratic and suggest a return to the reformism introduced in the 1950s by Nehru, although party members tend to describe themselves as 'neo-Gandhians' and to avoid references to Nehru.

Graham also found common ground between the outlook of the BJP and other non-communist opposition parties, although they were probably less than fully aware of this themselves. There was a nostalgia among many of them for several of the themes and conditions that had characterized the Nehru era. This was true even within Charan Singh's Lok Dal where the name of Nehru was distinctly unpopular, and there was a fondness for the constitution as it had been, and as it was implemented during the 1950s, when, for example, emergency powers were used with restraint. There were in addition, warm memories of the more balanced Centre–state relations of that period and a longing, too, for the days when the state was less intrusive in rural life, when peasant landholders got what they regard as more realistic prices for their produce. Ethics seemed more clearly defined and more commonly applied during the 1950s, when disadvantaged social groups were just awakening, and Nehru's reformism appeared sufficient to meet their demands. Many felt an urge to return to genuine non-alignment in foreign relations and a desire to re-establish more civilized interactions between the ruling party and the opposition at home. On each of these counts, however, it was possible to find at least one opposition party that did not share in the nostalgia. Atul Kohli has recently found BJP activists at the state level to be far less liberal in outlook than the national leaders Graham encountered. But there may now be enough common ground to suggest that if compelling reasons were to arise for co-operation among opposition parties at the national level, there would be some basis for it, at least at the level of ideas and party programmes.[51]

It is of course true that the opposition to the Congress-I did not achieve much unity in 1980 or 1984. There are at least two ways to view its failure to do so. Those who lean toward Graham's view can argue that, in 1980, the wounds from the internecine squabbles of the Janata years were too fresh and that, in 1984,

[51] Interview with B. D. Graham, Brighton, 12 October 1984.

popular sympathy for Rajiv Gandhi in the wake of the assassination rendered opposition actions irrelevant so that there was no incentive to unite. There are, on the other hand, those who doubt that the shared views that Graham encountered will outweigh the personal bitterness among opposition leaders and the antagonisms between groups of their supporters. They point to the lack of progress in opposition unity in 1984 even *before* the murder of Mrs Gandhi. At this writing, I remain ambivalent on the matter.

Let us know turn to an astonishing development of the early 1980s, the adoption by Indira Gandhi of themes that have traditionally belonged to the Hindu chauvinist right. To many who are familiar with the Congress in Nehru's time or in Mrs Gandhi's earlier years as prime minister, it may be difficult to believe that this happened. Yet, it appears that at some point during 1982, Congress-I leaders recognized that a confrontational posture towards the overwhelmingly Muslim National Conference Party in Kashmir and the Sikh extremists in Punjab (whom Mrs Gandhi's confidants, Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh, had initially encouraged in order to divide the opposition Akalis) might gain them the support of many Hindus in the Kashmir and Delhi elections. When numerous activists of the RSS deserted the increasingly liberal BJP to support Congress-I candidates in those elections, the tactic seemed to have worked surprisingly well.

It began to seem an even more attractive option after the defeat of the Congress-I in the southern states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in January 1983. That defeat led Congress-I leaders to suspect that the south might not support them at the next parliamentary election, and that they would therefore need to look to northern and central India for most of their Lok Sabha seats. Because their party organization was in such disarray that it could not cultivate much of a following through patronage—the main mode of operation during the 1960s—an evocative theme like Hindu chauvinism, which could be conveyed to voters through talk of threats to national unity from anti-national minorities, began to seem all the more useful.

It is impossible to regard this rightward shift as an accident, as something that happened with Congress-I leaders realizing too late that it was occurring and merely acquiescing. Too much of what took place required willful action by Mrs Gandhi and then by her

son Rajiv. Indeed, as early as August 1982, after commentators like Pran Chopra had warned against the dangers of courting the Hindu majority in north India by generating communal anxieties, I asked a general secretary of the AICC-I if that really could be the prime minister's intention. He responded, not by denying that this was her aim, but by seeking to justify it as a creative strategy.[52]

It remained the strategy of Congress-I leaders right through the election of 1984. Detailed accounts of the campaign were scarce in the Western press because many reporters at that time were engaged with the ghastly events in Bhopal. Although it may seem difficult to believe that Hindu chauvinism and anti-Sikh sentiments were important elements in the Congress-I election campaign, it was, in fact, the case. For example, at a November rally in Delhi, Rajiv Gandhi refused to prevent the city's Sikh mayor (a member of his own party) from being shouted down and then went on to use the word '*badla*' (revenge') in a speech that followed. He also refused to criticize the Hindu extremist organization, the RSS, which at every previous election had supported the Jana Sangh/BJP, but which swung heavily, and in some cases openly, behind the Congress-I on this occasion. The prime minister further refused to disavow RSS support, thereby conforming to the precedent set by his mother in mid-1983 in Kerala where the Congress-I received RSS backing[53]—and one of his leading party spokesmen even declined to admit that it was a communal organization.[54]

Sikh opinion was outraged and many Congress-I leaders were privately alarmed when two sitting MPs in Delhi who were said by an independent investigation to have been involved in the anti-Sikh riots of November were kept on the Congress-I ticket and when a third activist, also allegedly involved, was given a ticket that had been denied to a Sikh incumbent. The anti-Sikh theme cropped up in numerous subtle and not-so-subtle remarks in speeches by Congress-I leaders, in posters that appeared in some localities showing Mrs Gandhi being gunned down by turbaned assassins, and in one of the party's full-page advertisements that appeared nationwide in most English and indigenous language

[52] Interview with Satyanarayana Rao, Delhi, 18 August 1982.
[53] See, for example, *The Deccan Herald*, 12 August 1983.
[54] See the sources cited in fn. 50.

newspapers. The advertisement began with the question 'Will the country's border finally be moved to your doorstop?' and, after mentioning 'Assam, Punjab...', described the anti-national forces:

> They put a knife through the country and carve out a niche for their cynical, disgruntled ambition disguised as public aspiration.
> They raise a flag and give this niche the name of a nation.
> They sow hatred and grow barbed wire fences, watered with human blood.
> But it's you who step out and bump into the fences and bleed while they cash your vote to buy their ticket to power.

In case the anti-Sikh implications of much of this were not sufficiently clear, the text asked 'Why should you feel uncomfortable riding in a taxi driven by a taxi driver from another state?'.[55] Because a great many taxis in north India are driven by Sikhs, the message was clear.

It is essential that we understand the logic by which this strategy was reached, because it has major implications for the party system. First of all, both the Congress-I general secretary who tried to justify Hindu chauvinism to me in 1982 and, I believe, Mrs Gandhi saw the move to the communalist right as an exercise similar to her move towards the Marxist left in and after 1969. It was a means of undermining the parties that stood to the right of the Congress-I—mainly the BJP, but also to a degree the Lok Dal, which had elements within it susceptible to Hindu chauvinist appeals. It was clearly from the right that the main threat to the Congress-I was anticipated.[56]

The move to the right was also probably based on a curious belief by Mrs Gandhi that only she (and her son) stood between India and serious communal strife. So, still more curiously, she apparently believed that, by catalyzing communalist sentiments, by becoming the main mouthpiece for Hindu communalism, she was protecting India from the dangers of it. She appears to have rationalized this dangerous quest for short-term political advantage by concluding that communalism was safe only in her hands and that by taking it up, she could disarm it as she had disarmed leftist sentiment after 1969. I heard echoes of this view in December 1984 from several Muslim intellectuals who were

[55] See, for example, *The Statesman*, Delhi, 15 December 1984.
[56] Pranab Mukherjee's comments in *The Times*, London, 29 December 1983.

clearly frightened at the anti-Sikh, Hindu chauvinist content of Rajiv Gandhi's election campaign and who were seeking desperately for a benign explanation.

The Congress-I leaders also adopted what Rajni Kothari has correctly termed 'the rhetoric of all-out confrontation', in which the opposition parties were repeatedly attacked as anti-national force. We should recognize that this intolerant view of the opposition is in a sense a logical outgrowth of the history of the Congress. During the struggle for independence, the Congress sought and claimed to speak for all Indians, to be, as its name implied, an Indian nation coming together. After 1947, this theme survived as the Congress attempted to be what B. D. Graham has called 'a rally of the people as a whole'.[57] It is thus not altogether surprising that some Congressmen tend to see the party and the nation as identical, or that they tend to see opposition forces as anti-national.

It was, however, far from inevitable that the Congress leaders should adopt this narrow, intolerant view. Jawaharlal Nehru generally did not, although he sometimes slipped into this idiom when discussing communalist parties, but Indira Gandhi often did, and so, in the 1984 election campaign, did her son. He claimed, for example, that the opposition parties were 'receiving assistance from certain foreign powers, which were interested in making India weak', and that conferences of opposition leaders 'had sown the seeds of poison', that endangered national unity. He alleged that the Janata Party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Dalit Mazdoor Kisan party had links to Sikh extremists living in Britain.[58] He offered no evidence to support these charges, and none of them appears to have any substance. Mr Gandhi also described the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, N. T. Rama Rao, as a 'secessionist', a charge he has subsequently admitted to be false.[59] On a visit to Janata-ruled Karnataka, he implied that the Janata Party had assisted those who had murdered Mrs Gandhi. This was untrue, as were his assertions that

[57] B. D. Graham, 'Congress as a Rally', *South Asian Review*, January 1973, pp. 111–24.

[58] *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, 13 December 1984 and *The Indian Express*, Delhi, 26 December 1984.

[59] *The Hindu*, Madras, 7 December 1984.

the Janata Party 'was working hard to divide the country' and 'shielding extremists',[60] and that two prominent members of that party were collaborators with Pakistan.[61]

The prime minister also repeated 'at every campaign meeting'[62] that the opposition parties had supported the 'Anandpur Saheb Resolution'.[63] When opposition leaders heatedly denied this, Mr Gandhi said on 12 December 1984 that 'the proceedings of the Lok Sabha bore ample testimony to their attitude'.[64] On 13 December 1984, the *Indian Express* published the text of the relevant parliamentary debate on page one. Although it showed that the opposition had repudiated the resolution unambiguously, the premier continued making this charge.[65] These tactics dismayed many, including Congressmen and commentators, who had often supported Mrs Gandhi.[66]

The Congress-I campaign of newspaper advertisements carried this aggressive approach further. One of these sought to persuade voters that opposition rule might produce ghastly consequences. When government lacks firmness, it said,

> Vipers crawl out of their holes, predators prowl the streets and seemingly normal citizens take off their masks and shuffle in the shadows, waiting for the hour of the gun.
> The hour of acid bulbs, iron bars and daggers...
> Your vote can stop your groceries list turning into an arms inventory.
> Your vote can make all the difference.
> Between order and chaos.
> Give Order a Hand.[67]

[60] *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, 18 December 1984.

[61] *The Statesman*, Delhi, 18 December 1984.

[62] *The Times of India*, Delhi, 14 December 1984.

[63] This phrase actually refers to a number of resolutions that are open to varying interpretations, but which are regarded by many as separatist in character. It usually refers to the first, 1973 resolution, the contents of which are a matter of dispute.

[64] *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, 13 December 1984.

[65] *The Indian Express*, Delhi, 14 December 1984 and *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, 18 December, 1984.

[66] This is based on numerous interviews with such people. See for example, G. K. Reddy's scorching criticism in *The Hindu*, Madras, 9 December 1984.

[67] *The Hindu*, Madras, 15 December 1984.

This sort of thing naturally infuriated the opposition, particularly when considered alongside official figures that showed a steady rise in disorder and riot during Mrs Gandhi's last five years in power[68] and against the findings of two independent enquiries into the slaughter of over 2400 Sikhs in Delhi after the assassination. These enquiries uncovered evidence of involvement by Congress-I activists, evidence that a police investigation has reportedly found credible.[69] Despite these findings, however, the prime minister has recently refused to launch an official investigation into the riots because 'it will raise issues which are really dead'.[70]

His confrontational approach was part of a process that carried him well to the right of the BJP, which for some time had itself been moving away from the Hindu chauvinist right towards the centre of the political spectrum. His hardline rhetoric resembled, far more than that of the BJP, RSS claims that the loyalty to India of communists, Muslims, and others was in doubt.[71] Yet, even as they swung to the right of parties like the BJP, Congress-I leaders continued to denounce opposition parties for their dangerous rightist tendencies.[72]

Readers should not presume that less caustic rhetoric would have been used in the election campaign had Mrs Gandhi not been murdered. Even before the assassination, Rajiv Gandhi was taking this line, as when he 'attacked the opposition for supporting and instigating the Assam agitation, joining hands with anti-national forces in Kashmir and Punjab, and trying to sell the country'.[73] This is not an isolated example. The main themes of the election campaign had been decided well in advance of the assassination on 31 October 1984. That outrage clearly provided an additional reason for using such scorching rhetoric, for it crystallized in many voters' minds the anxieties about national unity that this kind of language sought to exploit. But the leaders

[68] Ibid.

[69] People's Union for Democratic Right and People's Union for Civil Liberties, *Who are the Guilty?* (New Delhi: privately published, 2nd edition, 1984), and *The Guardian*, London, 30 January 1985.

[70] *India Today*, 15 February 1985. As the book goes to press, Rajiv Gandhi has authorized an official commission headed by Justice Ranganath Mishra.

[71] See, for example, *The Deccan Herald*, 12 August 1983.

[72] *The Times*, London, 29 December 1984.

[73] *The Indian Express*, Delhi, 22 October 1984.

of the Congress-I had been taking a vehemently confrontational line with the opposition for many months, most especially in their attempts during 1983 and 1984 to overturn the opposition-controlled governments of Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, and Andhra Pradesh.

Why did the Congress-I leaders adopt this confrontational approach? Two different reasons come to mind. First, although it caused a change in relations within the party system, confrontation was also a symptom of changes that had already occurred. By the early 1980s, both the Congress-I and most opposition parties had become so porous that a substantial leakage of personnel out of any of them became a very real possibility. And the more that the Congress-I and most opposition parties suffered organizational decay, ideological laxity, and the imposition of personal control by those at the apex, the more they resembled each other. Potential defectors from one party to the next therefore felt that they had less distance to travel. By confronting and reviling the opposition parties, the Congress-I leaders sought to impede defections to the opposition by erecting barriers between their party and the other parties and by putting distance between the Congress-I and the others. In this respect, there is a curious similarity between the confrontational election campaign and the post-election and anti-defection law. Both are designed to erect the kind of walls around the ruling party that its organization had had the strength to generate in the 1960s, but which had wasted away when the organization decayed after 1969.

The second reason for the choice of this confrontational approach is that, given the nature of the Congress-I rule between 1980 and 1984 and the assumptions that had underpinned it, the Gandhis had few other options. As already noted that by the time Mrs Gandhi assumed power in 1980, she had lost confidence in the state as an agency for creative action in society. As a result, next to no serious attempts were made by the authorities during her last term as prime minister to develop carefully designed social programmes. There were, therefore, few new legislative achievements between 1980 and 1984 to which the Congress-I leaders could point. Indeed, their election speeches and the party manifesto made virtually no reference to government programmes after 1980. It seemed at times as if some other party had been in power during that period. The only major reference in the manifesto to positive

developments after 1980 was to advances on the economic front, where the credit tended to go to market forces and not to the govenrment.[74]

The government had sought, in the period after 1980, to direct popular attention to a number of major 'spectaculars' in order to justify the existence of a state in which the prime minister had lost confidence. Much was made of the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Heads of Governemnt Conference, Antarctic explorations, and the like. But the Congress-I leaders rightly sensed that these were not election winners. They also rightly believed that Mrs Gandhi would have great difficulty in obtaining a majority in the election,[75] and, given the absence of any major legislative achievements and the presence of a highly unreliable party organization, they were driven to present Mrs Gandhi as a figure of stability amid increasing instability and to continue to court the votes of the Hindu majority across north India by making appeals based on Hindu chauvinism and the notion that India's unity was in jeopardy. If a party adopts that set of themes, it is impelled by the logic of chauvinism and its 'India-in-danger' message to raise alarms and to excoriate the opposition as dangerous, anti-national destabilizers.

A brief comment is needed here on the manner in which Rajiv Gandhi and his party won the election of 1984. At least five factors appear to have had a significant impact, although, as I have argued elsewhere, we will probably never be able to say with certainty what their relative importance was.[76] First, there was, of course, a sympathy factor after the murder of Mrs Gandhi, but its impact has probably been overestimated. It was a 'factor' rather than a 'wave'. Another obvious element was the abject failure of most opposition parties, especially the so-called national parties, to provide a credible alternative to the Congress-I. Yet both of these seem to have been less important than three other things. First, Rajiv Gandhi's youth, his freshness, and his apparent lack of a political past helped him to represent himself both as a figure of stability and continuity, on the one hand, and as a figure of renewal and change, on the other. As Rajni Kothari wrote long ago, this was

[74] *Indian National Congress (I) Election Manifesto, 1984* (New Delhi, 1984).

[75] This is based on interviews with a large number of Congress-I officials in December 1984.

[76] James Manor, 'The Indian General Election of 1984', *Electoral Studies* August, 1985, pp. 149–52.

an unbeatable combinaion.[77] A second crucial factor was the widespread (and, I believe, erroneous) perception that national unity was in danger. This fear was crystallized in many people's minds by the trauma of the assassination and was relentlessly exploited by the Congress-I. Finally, there was a related Hindu backlash that was encouraged by the prime minister and his party. To point to these factor as decisive is to identify this election as distinct from most of the national and state-level elections since 1972. Those earlier elections tended to be decided on concrete issues and, particularly, on the quality of the incumbent government's performance. The 1984 election was decided at the level of anxieties, images, evocations, and symbols. The result bespoke an aggrieved and fearful assertiveness together with a desperate need for hope and some prospect of renewal in government.

In order to see how things had changed by the end of this phase, let us recall some of the specific observations that Morris-Jones and Kothari made about the party system. In late 1984, India still had a multi-party system that permitted free competition, a system in which one party, bearing the name of Congress, occupied a dominant position in the New Delhi Parliament and in many state assemblies. However, the Congress-I no longer possessed a party organization strong enough to place it in a dominant position outside of the legislatures.

The 1984 election landslide was achieved in spite of serious organizational weaknesses. The Congress-I organization was insubstantial, highly corrupt in many regions, wracked with factions that engaged in severe conflicts, unrepresentative of the broad array of social groups for whom it claimed to speak, and very inefficient at delivering goods and services to them and at arranging bargains between them. It was very short of idealists, intellectuals, and, most essentially, honest, skilled managers. Those it possessed were often excluded from positions of influence. The party was, therefore, in no fit condition to administer governments at the state and national levels in a rational, reliable, effective manner. It was also distinctly short of policies in many spheres (although the new prime minister has begun to change that), and where such policies existed, it lacked the personnel at the district and subdistrict levels to ensure that bureaucrats actually implemented them.

[77] Rajni Kothari, 'Government by Mandate', *Seminar*, January 1972, p. 23.

Neither was it true any longer that this was a dominant party system 'without a trace of alternation'. Most elections at the state and national levels since 1972 have led to alternations (indeed, every Indian state has now had a spell of non-Congress government), as an awakening electorate has made re-election increasingly difficult to achieve. And it is hard to see how the 1984 Lok Sabha result, which was substantially the product of the extraordinary circumstances in which it occurred, can be expected to change that basic tendency in the system.

Opposition parties in the post-1980 period did not have much influence over sections of the Congress-I in the legislatures that the latter dominated. There was little 'positive communication and interaction between them'. This was partly explained by the increasingly confrontational approach that various parties, most notably the Congress-I, adopted towards rival organizations and by the expectation within many opposition parties that they might one day defeat the Congress-I. But it is more adequately explained by the decay that had occurred within many political parties, again, most notably, within the Congress-I. The Congress no longer contained an organization rational enough to enable rightist or leftist factions within it to produce results by applying pressure on party leaders or within the councils of the party. Information seldom flowed freely from one level of the organization up to the next, because the abandonment of intra-party democracy had caused party operatives to tell those at higher levels only what they thought the latter wanted to hear. And even when pressure or information did flow up through the hierarchy, it seldom elicited an adequate or logical response from an organization crippled by harsh factional fighting and, in many areas, galloping normlessness. So, opposition groups saw little point in seeking to strike up good relations with like-minded Congressmen.

The decay within the Congress-I also made it impossible for the party to conduct itself with enough efficiency to manage within itself, as it once had, most of the major conflicts in Indian public life, to interpret the logic of politics at one level to the levels above and below, or to play the central role in integrating India's many and varied regions, subcultures, and social groups. Indeed, many social groups received such inadequate or even harmful responses from Congress-I politicians, or were so dismayed by the normless or criminal behaviour of Congressmen in many regions, that they

have turned away from the Congress party and, because many opposition parties have also suffered decay, from politics in general.

In these circumstances, Congress-I leaders after 1982 or so sometimes adopted the opposite of their former policy of arranging accommodations between social groups, subcultures, and regions and actually sought to set them against one another. This enabled the ruling party to absorb within itself discontented groups who saw it as the only party capable of providing stability amid chaos—which the Congress-I had itself wilfully helped to generate. But these actions and reactions may ultimately cause more problems than either the Congress or the political system can cope with and may, in the long term, present opportunities for rival parties on the extremes of the party system.

There still may have been in this phase considerable validity in Morris-Jones' suggestion, made in the late 1960s, that complexities and ambiguities in Indian society prevent the political system from having to face the kind of serious conflict that societies more prone to polarization and contradiction might generate. It has always been difficult to measure this, for it entails the enumeration of dogs that do not bark. But there is no doubt that a great many more contradictions existed in Indian society in the early 1980s than in the 1960s, contradictions between interest groups (caste, class, communal, regional, and issue-specific), most of which had not crystallized in the 1960s. Some of them had not fully formed even in 1984, but they had acquired enough substance and collective self-consciousness amid the general political awakening to produce conflict that could no longer be defused by bargaining and co-optation.[78] This would have been true even if the ruling party had possessed the means to perform those tasks well, which it did not.

This is not to say that India was on the brink of a social crisis or breakdown. As I have argued at length elsewhere, Indian society is particularly well equipped, in both structure and habits of mind, to insulate itself from damage that might result from decay and anomic forces originating in the political sphere.[79] But it still needs

[78] See, for example, R. I. Duncan, 'Levels, the Communication of Programmes, and Sectional Strategies in Indian Politics', D. M.Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1977.

[79] James Manor, 'Anomie in Indian Politics: Origins and Potential Wider Impact', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 18, May 1983, pp. 725–34.

to be recognized that in the 1980s this society threw up conflicts and problems that made it well-nigh impossible to maintain the sort of broad coalition that gave the Congress its dominant position in the party system in the 1960s (and which may have given the Congress-I its huge victory in the 1984 election).

During this third phase, between 1977 and 1984, the Congress was a good deal less assiduous than it had been in the period described by Kothari and Morris-Jones in its efforts 'to preserve democratic forms, to respect the rule of law, and to avoid undue strife'. Neither has it shown great sensitivity on the question of respect for minorities'.[80] Because these were traits that assisted it in defusing and even in reaping benefits from opposition-led agitations, it is possible that recent changes may, over time, reduce its capacity for accommodation and thereby create opportunities for opposition groups.

In their later reassessments of the party system, Kothari and Morris-Jones emphasized two major, interconnected points. The first was the continuing ability of the Congress, even after the 1967 election, to play the central role in maintaining and restructuring political consensus in India. The second was the continuing growth of a 'market' polity, that is to say, a polity based on bargaining. Most of the important bargaining in that period still occurred within the Congress, among factions, among representatives of social groups, and between people at different levels and in different regions. But bargaining also occurred between the Congress and the opposition parties.

Much of this sounds unfamiliar in the light of events over the last decade or so. It is certainly possible to say that the 1984 election victory of Rajiv Gandhi represented both the maintenance and the restructuring of political consensus. But we need to ask whether his party is capable of continuing to sustain and renew that consensus week in and week out throughout the government's term in office. This seems unlikely, mainly because by 1984 it was incapable of arranging and maintaining political bargains that are essential to that task.

One feature, though not the central one, of the 'market' polity to which Morris-Jones called attention was an increase in defections. This raises a difficult issue that has never been fully examined:

[80] Kothari, 'The Congress "System"', op. cit., pp. 1168–70.

to what extent can defections be seen as contributions to the maintenance and restructuring of consensus in Indian politics? I submit that a defection can be seen as such a contribution, provided it is primarily the result of discontent among a legislator's supporters over unacceptable treatment by the party to which he or she originally belonged, and provided the switch to another party was mainly intended to obtain better treatment. Such defections represent rational responses from social or subregional groups to parties' misdeeds or omissions, and they serve to remind parties of the need to maintain consensus.

Many defections in the period that Morris-Jones described were not of that nature, however. Many, indeed, appear to have been undertaken by individual legislators to enhance their position in terms of power, money, or both.[81] Defections of this kind are clearly part of the 'market' polity, for bargains of a sort are being made. But such privateering is likely to impede the maintenance and restructuring of consensus, for such defectors are responding to a logic other than that which governs the maintenance of consensus. The defections that became such a prominent feature of Indian politics in the 1980s tended overwhelmingly to be responses to large cash payments by the Congress-I which, as the ruling party, could alone command such vast financial resources. In fairness, however, it should be emphasized that more than a few defectors and near-defectors were turning to the Congress-I out of frustration with unresponsive leaders. This was especially true in Andhra Pradesh before August 1984, where N. T. Rama Rao was excessively autocratic.[82]

It should be apparent to anyone who glanced at newspaper reports from India between 1982 and 1984 that very serious Centre–state conflict had developed in cases where opposition parties were in power at the state level. In the post-1967 period, Y. B. Chavan was able to maintain relatively civil relations with opposition-led state governments because the Congress did not adopt a confrontational posture towards the opposition and because it was entirely possible that the Congress might join

[81] It is not always easy to identify the motives of defectors. See for example, Stanley A. Kochanek, *The Congress Party of India*, op. cit., pp. 293 and 447.

[82] This is based on a large number of interviews with legislators and journalists in Hyderabad, 11 and 12 January 1985.

opposition parties in coalitions at the state level. This happened several times during the period. It is not the sort of thing that happened in the 1980s, however, except in Kerala, where extraordinary circumstances applied. The Congress-I was pugnacious towards the opposition, because the personality of its leaders (or at least its former leader) inclined in that direction and because it needed to be standoffish once so little separated the decayed Congress-I from decayed opposition parties.

1984 Onwards

The final phase in the evolution of India's parties and party system is the period since the eighth general election in the last week of 1984. Our conclusions in this section must be tenuous for, at the time of writing this paper (1985), the phase is only twelve months old.

In the year since his election victory, which he achieved by reviling and confronting the opposition parties, Rajiv Gandhi has been more accommodating in his dealings with the opposition than his mother ever was. He has also been more conciliatory towards regional movements and parties some of which he had sought to topple from power at the state level through bribery[83] and manoeuvers of dubious constitutionality. This has earned him appreciative comments from the opposition chief ministers of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Moreover, his agreements with leaders of regional movements in Punjab and Assam, and the subsequent elections in those states are among the greatest achievements of his first year in office.

Some doubts still linger, however, about his commitment to accommodation. His abrupt change from an assertive to a conciliatory stance in Assam lost him a great deal of support among those who had been attracted by the former approach. The same thing may also have occurred in Punjab during 1985. Because his turnabout entails a departure from the Hindu chauvinism of recent years and because this will disappoint many voters in other states, he may eventually find the cost of conciliation too great. It is also possible that he will feel able to pursue accommodation only so long as he feels politically secure, that if he begins to feel vulnerable

[83] See, for example, *The Indian Express*, Bombay, 1 January 1984.

he may revert to the confrontational stance of 1984. But for the present, the predominant trend is towards a reconstruction of the tolerably good relations with the opposition that characterized the pre-Indira Gandhi years.

Rajiv Gandhi's main preoccupation during his first year in office has been a reordering within the formal institutions of state. He has concentrated on changing personnel within both the bureaucracy and ministerial ranks of the central government, though not, to any significant degree, at the state level. He has sought to persuade officials at intermediate levels to take the initiative more often in order to break the log jams that had immobilized much of the central government in his mother's day. He has also rid the prime minister's secretariat of the unqualified personnel who held posts thanks to their fierce loyalty to Indira Gandhi, and he has decentralized power somewhat by curtailing the power of the secretariat.[84] All this may suggest a reordering of affairs within the Congress party. The prime minister appeared to indicate that intention in late 1985 when he shifted key aides from his secretariat to leading party posts, but very little was said or done about the party until the last week of 1985.

Then, in Bombay on 28 December, the hundredth anniversary for the Indian National Congress, the prime minister delivered the most scorching critique of the party ever uttered by one of its leaders. He spoke of 'cliques...enmeshing the living body of the Congress in 'their net of avarice'. He complained of Congress operatives' 'self-aggrandisement, their corrupt ways, their linkages with vested interests...and their sanctimonious posturings...', and he added that 'corruption is not only tolerated...but even regarded as a hallmark of leadership'.[85]

This attack on the Congress party, which was quite accurate, is likely to produce one of two outcomes. Given the wretched state of the party, Rajiv Gandhi may take drastic action to cleanse the Congress, or he may conclude that there is so little hope of restoring a modicum of rationality and probity to the party that no serious effort will be made. If he takes the latter route, he will, in effect, be gambling that he can get along without a party

[84] James Manor, 'India: Rebuilding amid Awakening and Decay', *Current History*, March 1986.

[85] *The Times of India*, Bombay, 29 December 1985 and *The Times*, London, 30 December 1985.

organization. He will be depending on the performance of the formal institutions of state, manned by his ministers and bureaucrats, on his personal appeal, and on innovations such as the liberalization of the economy and the introduction of microtechnology to win him the support of the electorate. In a political system in which parties, particularly the Congress party, have been the main instruments for integrating and governing the nation, for detecting and responding to discontents and pressures from interest groups, for managing social conflict and for cultivating electoral support through the distribution of resources, in such a system, to do without a party organization is to ask for trouble. Even a powerful executive presidency on Gaullist lines—which is an option under consideration—is unlikely to perform adequately the roles formerly played by the party organization.

Nevertheless, the evidence from Rajiv Gandhi's first fifteen months in power suggests that he may eventually be compelled to do without a strong Congress organization and even to seek a radical reduction in the importance of parties in the political system. The prime minister appears already to have dallied too long to revive the Congress-I. During the first few months after the murder of his mother, he had spurned a clear opportunity to make radical changes in the party. That opportunity appears now to have passed and is unlikely to arise again. It was mainly available between the assassination on 31 October 1984 and the state assembly elections in March 1985, when many candidates for national and state legislatures were selected. Why did he let it pass? His hesitation is explained in part by the trauma the assassination produced and the difficult task of taking command of the government and mounting an election campaign. It is also likely that he was somewhat deceived by the misleading appearance of unity and order that his party presented in that period. To understand how it came to give that impression, it is necessary to recall how the extraordinary circumstances that pertained to India during those crucial weeks freed the new prime minister from many of the intra-party factional troubles that would normally have assailed any leader of the Congress-I.

Consider first the speed with which events unfolded in the aftermath of the assassination. The first thirteen days were a time of mourning and uncertainty about what would happen next. It was impossible in that period for faction leaders at the state and

national levels within the Congress-I to engage in manoeuvres or to lobby the bereaved premier. When the official mourning ceased, it was announced almost immediately that polling in a general election would begin on 24 December, two weeks earlier than most people anticipated. This gave faction leaders fourteen fewer days in which to deploy their forces in the struggle for party tickets.

Candidate selections had to be finalized almost immediately and, given the tragic nature of recent events, it was both unseemly and politically unwise to engage in aggressive, disruptive behaviour or to attempt to put pressure on their new leader. Congressmen expected Rajiv Gandhi to lead them to victory, thanks to a sympathy wave, and they were therefore doubly reluctant to risk annoying him. And, because he was something of an unknown quantity to many of them, and it was not at all clear exactly what sort of action might upset him, they were rendered still more cautious. It made more sense in the short run to fall in with whatever decisions the high command might make and then wait for a more promising day to renew the fight with their factional opponents.[86]

Then on 16 December, just as the election campaign was reaching top gear, the government persuaded the Election Commission to announce that state assembly elections would be held in nine states plus Pondicherry in March or April 1985.[87] The implication clearly was that, if factions within Congress-I whose members had been denied Lok Sabha tickets attempted to sabotage their factional rivals during the election campaign, they would pay a price when the time came to distribute party nominations for the assembly polls. This was a highly effective threat to make, for, with the main locus of factional conflict within the ruling party at the state level, nominations to the state assemblies are of prime concern to potential squabblers. The result was a remarkably low incidence of dissidence among Congressmen who had quarrelled frequently, openly, even violently and, occasionally, murderously among themselves in the years since 1980.

A great many people who were capable of quite normless factional conflict were still present within the Congress-I. Unless substantial numbers of them could be removed or neutralized,

[86] I am grateful to Iqbal Narain for this information.
[87] *The Statesman*, Delhi, 17 December 1984.

destructive factionalism was virtually certain to recur. There is little evidence to indicate that the prime minister and his aides took steps during the election campaign to begin this process. No fewer than 121 sitting Congress-I MPs were denied renomination in 1984 (that is, just under 37 per cent of the party's old Lok Sabha delegation), but this did not represent a cleansing of corrupt, criminal, or contentious elements. Potential candidates were mainly assessed on their ability to win by leaders who were remarkably insecure about their prospects, and many people with very unsavoury reputations were reselected.[88] Only a very small number of such types were expelled, most notable among them, A. R. Antulay. Selections for the state assembly elections in March 1985 were only marginally less cautious, despite the reassurance of a general election triumph only a few weeks earlier.

After the election, the prime minister took some modest steps to improve the performance of his party, but they have so far had little impact, although they have served to illustrate how severe the problems are. He has, for example, insisted that top party administrators give him frank reports on political events around the country. This may sound like an obvious request, but for years under Mrs Gandhi, leading Congressmen told the premier only what they thought she wished to hear. They had seen too many bearers of sad tidings sacked for their candour. Leading party officials now contend that this former practice has been reversed in the national Congress-I headquarters in New Delhi. What has not yet been much affected is the tendency of state-level party units to send rosy reports to New Delhi.[89] Changing that will require major and highly risky structural changes within the Congress-I. It was Mrs Gandhi's abandonment of intra-party elections in the early 1970s that turned the Congress into a party of 'yes-men', and it will probably require a democratization of the Congress to restore its once formidable information-gathering capacity. There is at this writing much talk of party elections soon. But unless an

[88] These statistics can be extrapolated from Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *General Elections 1984: Reference Handbook* (New Delhi: Press Information Bureau, 1984). These comments are also based on numerous interviews with Congress operatives and political analysts in Delhi and five states during December 1984 and January 1985.

[89] Interview with A. K. Antony, New Delhi, 6 January 1985.

energetic purge of factious and criminal elements takes place first, elections will simply entrench unreliable groups in power.

Rajiv Gandhi has begun, tentatively in a few of India's numerous political arenas, to replace dubious figures with people of competence and probity. In the state of Rajasthan during 1985, for example, he ousted a chief minister whose reputation for ineffective administration and less than rigorous bookkeeping had alarmed several of the state's leading Congressmen. He replaced him with a former chief minister who had solid accomplishments but whose loyalty had been judged insufficiently fierce by Mrs Gandhi. The result is a major improvement in the party and the government in Rajasthan.

In several other states, the new premier's appointments of new leaders to provincial units of the party indicate that he, unlike his predecessor, does not perceive strong regional leaders to be threats. (Although this does not yet mean that power within the party has been significantly decentralized.) His problem in many regions, however, is that he cannot find people of skill and integrity who also possess the minimal local following to equip them to take command. In many states, if he were to purge the party's upper echelons of dubious figures, he would have no upper echelons left.

Consider, for example, his decision to name Bansi Lal to a cabinet post, a choice that raised many eyebrows, not least in the Congress. On investigation, this move seems to have been made because Rajiv Gandhi needed Bansi Lal as a counterweight to another potent Jat leader from Haryana, the state's chief minister, Bhajan Lal. The latter was expected to resist any accommodation with the Sikhs and the state of Punjab. But why not simply dismiss Bhajan Lal—who after all defected *en masse* with his state cabinet to the Congress-I in 1980 from the Janata Party—and spare himself the odium of having one of the hard men of the Emergency, Bansi Lal, in his government? The answer is that the prime minister can find no one else in the Haryana party who could take over the state and withstand the subversive doings that could be expected from both Bhajan Lal and Bansi Lal. Rajiv Gandhi is trapped by the wretched condition of his party there into perpetuating that very condition. Early elections within the Haryana Congress-I can only reinforce the problem. Similar dilemmas exist in numerous other states.

In several states, the Congress-I is also faced with severe internal divisions that prevent it from taking advantage of useful opportunities. This is true, for example, in West Bengal, where violent clashes within the Congress-I are common—indeed, one even occurred in faraway Bombay where two Bengali factions skirmished at the party's centenary celebrations—and where intra-party murders are not unknown. It is also true in Karnataka, where at least seven splinters prevent the Congress-I from developing any significant coherence.

Perhaps the most damaging such conflict has plagued the Kerala unit of the party. In the wake of the 1984 election, in which the Congress-I and its allies made major gains against the Marxist-led alliance, it was clearly in the party's interest to hold an early state assembly election. By taking advantage of their momentum from the Lok Sabha poll, they might have broken the stalemate with the Marxists that has persisted for many years. The Kerala chief minister was, however, unwilling to fight a state election, because he feared that another faction within the Congress-I, with better connections in New Delhi, might gain most of the nominations for the new assembly and oust him from the leadership. His faction's interests were therefore put before those of the party, and the Congress-I let a highly promising opportunity slip away. If Rajiv Gandhi is to free himself of this kind of self-defeating factionalism, drastic action will be necessary.

His blistering critique of the party on the occasion of its centenary may suggest that he is poised to do this, but certain other recent actions indicate that the caution that marked his candidate selections in late 1984 and early 1985 may continue. The appointment of Jagdish Tytler, first to the post of joint secretary of the party, and then to a junior ministerial post is such a selection. Tytler was one of Sanjay Gandhi's more aggressive lieutenants, a man who had numerous criminal charges standing against him when the Congress-I returned to power in 1980 and who has openly admitted an assault on a policeman.[90] He is also reliably alleged, along with several other Congress-I leaders, of involvement in the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi after the murder of Mrs Gandhi.[91]

[90] *New York Times*, 16 January 1985.

[91] People's Union for Democratic Rights and People's Union for Civil Liberties, *Who are the Guilty?*

Rajiv Gandhi's decision to promote Tytler twice suggests that, far from pursuing a thorough purge of figures associated with the normlessness of former days, he wishes to signify to such people that there are still places for them in the Congress-I. It therefore seems unlikely that the party will soon overcome the ills that the premier himself so vividly depicted in his centenary address. Unless it can overcome these and recover some of its old organizational strength outside the legislatures, it will not be able to remain dominant within the legislatures. In future elections, it will not be able to count on the kind of intense emotionalism that compensated for its organizational weakness at the general election of 1984.

These problems of the Congress-I, and the difficulties that confront anyone seeking to attend to them, have also made the party vulnerable to infiltration by political forces that used to operate within opposition parties. This has, for the time being at least, somewhat altered relations within the party system. It is even possible that it could one day threaten the open, freely competitive character of the political system. I refer here to the entry into the 1984 Congress-I election campaign at grassroots levels of a huge number of activists from the Hindu extremist group, the RSS.[92] It is impossible to say how many have remained within the ruling party since the election, but even if most have departed, the Congress-I has shown its vulnerability to infiltration, and the possibility of a recurrence is far more likely than it once was.

It is of course true that, when Mrs Gandhi's Congress moved leftward in the late 1960s, it was able to absorb and disarm leftists who came into it. But the Congress-I of today is a good deal less able to contain the forces of the communal right. RSS activists entered the party in far larger numbers than came over in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They also came into widely scattered arenas across much of India and at low levels, whereas the earlier leftist influx tended to occur at élite levels where they were more manageable. The RSS men, unlike the leftists, appear mainly to have entered in coherent groups large enough to outweigh the strength of the pre-existing Congress-I organization in many parts

[92] This was clear from numerous interviews, particularly in north India, with BJP and Congress-I activists during December 1984 and from sources cited in fn. 50.

of northern and central India. Given the decay of the party since the early 1970s, entrants no longer require much manpower or cohesion for this to happen.

It is also possible, to make matters worse, that communalism is more difficult to contain than are leftist sentiments. Jawaharlal Nehru certainly thought so, mainly because he could see how reforms could remove the main causes of leftist agitations, but he could not see how communalist or caste agitations might be defused. In his day in most parts of India, the agrarian social order weighed very heavily against the development of a mass base by leftist forces. But it is far from certain that society today presents communalists with the sort of natural impediments that greeted (and still greet) leftists. The steady rise of communal violence in recent years[93] suggests that the awakening of the electorate (which entails the crystallization of the collective self-consciousness of many caste and communal groups) amid the decay of institutions may mean that existing social conditions often facilitate rather than retard the advance of communalism. The manipulation of parochial sentiments has always been a dangerous game in South Asia, as the avoidable tragedy of Sri Lanka demonstrates,[94] but in India it has probably not been as dangerous as it now is since the immediate aftermath of partition.

Finally, it is difficult to say these days, as Morris-Jones did after the 1967 election, that the political system had moved away from dependence upon one leader and that recent changes in the Congress and the party system made the stability of the regime seem more assured than ever. The situation today is not without promise. Several opposition parties are now more attuned to the possibility of taking power at the state level and of joining a ruling coalition at the national level. Despite their disastrous showing in the 1984 election, some of them could still forge themselves into a plausible alternative to the ruling party. But the Congress-I today is patently dependent on one leader, an inherently unstable situation. There are signs that Rajiv Gandhi recognizes the need to rebuild the party as an institution with genuine corporate

[93] *The Times*, London, 18 May 1984.

[94] See, for example, James Manor (ed.), *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, (London and New York: St Martin's, 1984), especially the articles by Gananath Obeyesekere and Jonathan Spencer.

substance. But it is far from clear that he possesses the determination to press ahead with the thorough cleansing and restructuring that is required. Even if he does, the task will be fiendishly difficult, given the extent of the popular awakening and the institutional decay of recent years. It is nonetheless important that he should succeed, for there must be serious doubts about the liberal, representative order, or what has increasingly become over the last twenty years 'India's democracy', surviving many more shocks unless substantial reinstitutionalization takes place within the ruling party and unless more open and civil relationships can be developed within the party system.

15

The Fragmentation of the Indian Party System, 1952–1999: Seven Competing Explanations

E. Sridharan

Introduction

This paper aims at providing a long-range overview of the process of fragmentation of the Indian party system at the national level over the half-century since independence in 1947 and the first general elections in 1952 to the thirteenth general elections in 1999, and also the evolution of alliances and trends towards reconsolidation into a less fragmented system with fewer poles. It describes and analyses the process of fragmentation of the one party-dominated national party system, dominated by the encompassing centrist umbrella-type Indian National Congress (henceforth Congress) party. This process has resulted in an evolving national party system, still in flux, in which no party has achieved a parliamentary majority for the last five general elections (1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999), necessitating minority and/or coalition governments, even while party systems at the state level have become bipartisan or bipolar, hence *less* fragmented, in more and more states.

The paper is an overview of the party system and focusses on parties' electoral record and hence their position in the party system rather than on their social bases or organizational dynamics. It describes this evolving fragmentation at the electoral and legislative levels in terms of the shifts in vote share, seat shares and evolution of electoral alliances at both the national and state levels, since the national party system is an aggregate of the state-level

party systems. It also assesses competing explanations for these shifts to uncover their underlying logic.

There are, broadly speaking, two classes of explanations for the configuration of party systems in the comparative literature. One can be called the social cleavage theory of party systems, and the other the political–systemic theory of party systems, of which the most elaborate are the electoral rules theories of party systems.[1] The social cleavage theory postulates that the party system will reflect the principal cleavages in society, as for example, between capital and labour in ethno-culturally homogeneous industrialized societies having parties positioned on a Left–Right spectrum. The political–systemic theory, particularly the electoral rules theory, postulates that the larger political system's and, more specifically, electoral system's rules, principally, the size of constituencies (number of representatives elected from each constituency), the structure of the ballot (choosing a party list, an individual candidate or a mix of the two), and the decision rule or electoral formula (proportional representation, first-past-the-post, variants of each)

[1] Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York: Free Press, 1967) for the classic statement of the social cleavage theory of party systems: and Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: the Stabilisation of European Electorates, 1885–1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) for a modified version which argues essentially that social cleavages do not translate automatically into party systems but offer easy mobilization opportunities. Much the same is argued by Rajni Kothari in his 'Caste and Modern Politics', in Sudipta Kaviraj (ed.), *Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 58, when he says: 'Those who complain of "casteism in politics" are really looking for a sort of politics which has no basis in society. ...Politics is a competitive enterprise...and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiances in order to mobilise and consolidate positions...,' thus making the social cleavage theory of party systems appear somehow natural. For recent works within the electoral rules theory of party systems, see Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, *Seats and Votes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences* (New York: Agathon Press, 1986); and older classics, Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State* (New York: Wiley, 1963); Douglas Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967).

create varying disproportionalities between votes and seats, and, hence, incentives for the coalescing or splitting of political forces, which will be reflected in the number, relative weight, and ideological positioning of political parties.[2] For example, a very proportional system consisting of large, multi-member constituencies conduces to a low effective threshold of representation and hence to even small parties getting elected and playing a role in government formation in typically, multi-party coalitions, such as in Israel and the Netherlands.[3] In such a system, small parties would not have much incentive to merge with larger parties at the cost of ideological compromise, whereas the opposite would hold true in a first-past-the-post system. We will discuss competing explanations of the evolution of the Indian party system in the later part of the paper, some of which will fall into one or other broad category of explanations outlined. However, before this it is logically necessary to lay out the patterns of fragmentation in the unavoidable minimum detail.

The Evolution of the Pattern of Fragmentation of the Party System 1967–89

Congress Hegemony 1952–67

The first four general elections to the Lok Sabha, 1952, 1957, 1961, and 1967, coincided with elections to all the state assemblies. In the first three of these, the Congress party won an over two-third majority of seats in the Lok Sabha on the basis of only a plurality of votes of 44–8 per cent (Table 15.1). It also won a majority of seats in the state assemblies of all the then existing states from 1952–62, again on the basis of mostly a plurality of votes against a fragmented opposition that varied from state to state. The only exceptions were Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, and Kerala dominated by the National Conference, Independents, and in

[2] Taagepera and Shugart, in *Seats and Votes*, emphasize ballot structure, district magnitude and electoral formula as the basic variables, Arend Lijphart emphasizes in addition, a derivative variable, effective threshold of representation, and assembly size, and considers the special cases of presidentialism and *apparentement* (linking of party lists).

[3] See Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*, op. cit., p. 22, Table 2.2.

TABLE 15.1: Elections to the Lok Sabha 1952–99

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999
Total Seats	489	494	494	520	518	542	542	542	543	543	543	543	543
Contested	479	482	491	515	517	540	529[a]	541	528[b]	521[c]	543	539	543
Uncontested	10	12	3	5	1	2	1	1	1	–	–	–	–
Indian National Congress (INC), (INCI) in 1980	364 (479) 45.0%	371 (490) 47.8%	361 (488) 44.7%	283 (516) 40.8%	352 (441) 43.7%	154 (492) 34.5%	353 (492) 42.7%	415 (517) 48.1%	197 (510) 39.5%	232 (492) 36.5%	140 (529) 28.8%	141 (474) 25.9%	114 (453) 28.3%
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), (BLD) in 1977, (BJS) till 1971	3(94) 3.1%	4(130) 5.9%	14(196) 6.4%	35(251) 9.4%	22(160) 7.4%	295 (405) 41.3%	–	2(229) 7.4%	86(226) 11.5%	120 (468) 20.1%	161 (471) 20.3%	179 (384) 25.5%	182 (339) 23.8%
Janata Dal (United)(JDU) in 1999, (JD) 1989–98, (SWA) till 1971	–	–	18(173) 7.9%	44(178) 8.7%	8(56) 3.1%	–	–	–	142 (243) 17.7%	59(307) 11.8%	46(196) 8.1%	6(190) 3.2%	21(60) 3.1%
Communist Party of India (CPI)	16(49) 3.3%	27(110) 8.9%	29(137) 9.9%	23(106) 5.0%	23(87) 4.7%	7(91) 2.8%	11(48) 2.6%	6(66) 2.7%	12(50) 2.6%	14(42) 2.5%	12(43) 2.0%	9(58) 1.8%	4(54) 1.5%
Communist Party of India Marxist (CPIM)	–	–	–	19(62) 4.4%	25(85) 5.1%	22(53) 4.3%	36(63) 6.1%	22(64) 5.7%	33(64) 6.5%	35(60) 6.2%	32(75) 6.1%	32(71) 5.2%	33(72) 5.4%

(Contd.)

TABLE 15.1 contd.

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999
Lok Dal (LKD), (JPS) in 1980, (INCO) till 1977	–	–	–	–	16(238) 10.4%	3(19) 1.7%	41(294) 9.4%	3(174) 5.6%	0(117) 0.2%	0(78) 0.1%	–	–	–
Samajwadi Party (SP) in 1991, (JP) till 1989	–	–	–	–	–	–	31(432) 19.0%	10(219) 6.7%	0(156) 1.0%	5(345) 3.4%	17(111) 3.3%	20(164) 5.0%	26(151) 3.8%
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	11(117) 3.6%	5(249) 4.7%	14(225) 4.2%
Praja Socialist Party (PSP), (KMPP) in 1952	9(145) 5.8%	19(189) 10.4%	12(168) 6.8%	13(109) 3.1%	2(63) 1.0%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), (SOC) till 1962	12(254) 10.6%	–	6(107) 2.7%	23(122) 4.9%	3(93) 2.4%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Others	47 16.5%	31 7.6%	34 10.5%	45 10.0%	53 13.8%	52 9.9%	35 8.5%	44 10.0%	44 12.2%	41 12.1%	115 21.5%	141 26.3%	143 27.1%
Independents (IND)	38 15.9%	42 19.4%	20 11.1%	35 13.7%	14 8.4%	9 5.5%	9 6.4%	5 8.1%	12 5.2%	1 3.9%	9 6.3%	6 2.4%	6 2.8%

(Contd.)

TABLE 15.1 contd.

Source: David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952–1995*, New Delhi: Books and Things, 1995; Election Commission of India, *Statistical Report on General Elections*, vol. I (ver. I)–National and State Abstracts, for 1996, 1998 and 1999.

Notes: a. Elections were not held in 13 constituencies: 12 in Assam and 1 in Meghalaya.

b. Elections were not held in Assam (14 seats). Includes results for 4 seats which were countermanded.

c. Elections were not held in Jammu & Kashmir (6 seats) and Punjab (13 seats). Includes results for 10 seats which were countermanded out of total of 13 countermanded seats.

BLD—Bharatiya Lok Dal
BJS—Bharatiya Jana Sangh
SWA—Swatantra Party
INCU—Indian National Congress (Urs)
JPS—Janata Party Secular
INCO—Indian National Congress (Organized)
JP—Janata Party
KMPP—Kisan Mozdoor Praja Party
SOC—Socialist Party
SJP—Samajwadi Janata Party

alternation with the then united Communist Party of India-led coalition, respectively. In three Congress-dominated states it fell a little short of a majority in Orissa (1952–7), Madhya Pradesh (1962), and pre-1956 (Presidency), Madras (1952).

The Bipolarization of State Party Systems 1967–89

The 1967 election marks a break, with the Congress winning only 283 seats on the basis of its lowest ever vote share until then (40.8 per cent), and losing power in eight out of sixteen states. The 1971 elections saw a restoration of two-thirds Congress' majority in the Lok Sabha with 43.7 per cent votes and 352 seats. However, from the vantage point of the year 2000, the post-1967 period represents a secular decline in Congress strength nationally and in state after state. In the 'exceptional' post-Emergency elections of 1977, the Congress faced a temporarily united opposition consisting of the Janata Party formed just before the elections, and having a seat adjustment with Jagjivan Ram's Congress for Democracy, and the CPI-M, thus consisting of virtually the entire opposition except for the CPI and the DMK. The Congress was trounced, plunging to its lowest-till-then vote and seats figure of 34.5 per cent and 154 seats respectively. The Janata Party won a majority (295 seats, of which the Jana Sangh component was the single largest at 99 seats) on the basis of 41.3 per cent of the vote. This was a Congress-like victory in reverse, that is, a catchall umbrella party winning a seat majority on the basis of a vote plurality, but not, however, against a fragmented opposition.

In 1980, another Congress restoration took place following the disintegration of the Janata Party, again a near two-thirds majority of 353 seats (out of 542 seats) on the basis of a plurality of 42.7 per cent. The 1984 elections, another 'exceptional' election, following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, saw the highest ever Congress vote share (48.1 per cent) and 415 seats. The 1989 elections marked another turning point with the Congress crashing to 39.5 per cent and 197 seats against an opposition electoral 'alliance', consisting of seat adjustments, of the National Front coalition (of the Janata Dal and regional and minor parties) supported by the BJP and the Left parties that resulted in a large number of one-on-one contests with the Congress.

The post-1967 period also saw *a very important delinking of parliamentary and state assembly elections since 1971*, and a *suspension in organizational elections within the Congress from 1972 to 1992*, hand in hand with a centralization of power at the top of the party apparatus. It also saw the emergence of anti-Congress alliances, then of a principal opposition party to the Congress in state after state, in most states, representing a consolidation of the non-Congress space at the state level. The Index of Opposition Unity (IOU), rose in state after state over 1967–89.[4] This is particularly so if one considers opposition coalitions—and first party plus its pre-electoral allies—as a single party for the purposes of the IOU. In other words, a consolidation of the non-Congress opposition, state-by-state, broadly in tandem with such consolidation in the state assembly elections, took place over the period, leading even to the displacement of the Congress as one of the two leading parties or coalitions. *This bipolar consolidation was the key feature and driving force of the fragmentation of the nation party system.* In the 1990s, the relevant IOU is that of the alter-native coalition versus the leading coalition in many states characterized by electoral alliances. A consolidation of the non-Congress opposition, and in the 1990s bipolar consolidation, whether Congress was a player or not, took place at the state level for Lok Sabha elections and for state assembly elections in parallel.

The following pattern of bipolarization is discernible state-wise over 1967–89 for the general elections. In Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Delhi, the movement towards a two-party system began as early as 1967 with the consolidation of the non-Congress vote behind the Jana Sangh, the ancestor of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This system has remained stable to date. In three other states, Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura, a bipolar, Congress-versus-Left, two-alliance system in which the Congress (West Bengal) or Congress-led alliance of state-based minor parties (Kerala, Tripura) on the one hand, contested against a Left Front coalition of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), CPI (since the late 1970s in Kerala), and smaller Left parties, the two coalitions alternating in power.

[4] A measure of the fragmentation of the opposition space represented by the percentage share of the largest non-congress (in today's terms, non-ruling party) vote in the total opposition vote. The higher the IOU the less fragmented the opposition space.

In five other states, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Goa, a Congress–Regional Party two-party system came into being over 1967–89, disintegrating or changing in the 1990s with the rise of the BJP in all of these states.

In one major state, Tamil Nadu, the process began in 1967, and led to the elimination of the Congress from the top two positions, becoming an essentially bipolar contest between one of the two leading parties, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), and the other, with one of the two being allied to the Congress for parliamentary and state assembly elections. In this arrangement, which was stable from 1977 to 1996, the Congress was given the lion's share of the seats in the parliamentary elections in exchange for the regional ally being given the lion's share of state assembly seats.

In the North-Eastern Rim states of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Manipur, and in Sikkim, an unstable two-party or two-alliance contest prevailed between the Congress and a variety of regional parties.

Finally, the Congress retained preponderance until 1989 in seven major states—UP, Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Orissa—where no alternative party or alliance consolidated itself as a successful challenger for parliamentary elections, although a broad-front anti-Congress alliance, if put together, could have challenged the Congress as happened in 1967 and 1977.

Likewise, the following pattern of bipolarization is discernible for party systems for state assembly elections. The Congress party's position eroded even more than for parliamentary elections, and the consolidation of principal challenger parties or alliances at the state level is even more marked.

In three states, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh (HP), and in the Union Territory of Delhi, there was a con-solidation of non-Congress votes behind the BJP as second party over 1967–89.

In three states, Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura, there was a bipolar Congress-versus-Left, two-alliance consolidation of the party system, with the Congress leading alliances of small, state-specific parties in Kerala (from 1952) and Tripura, and going it alone in West Bengal, while the Left Front was led by the CPI-M with the CPI (from the early 1980 in Kerala) and smaller Left parties.

In Tamil Nadu, there was a bipolarization of the party system for the assembly elections between the DMK and the AIADMK since 1977 (following the split and emergence of the AIADMK in 1972) with the Congress allied (or with imperfect 'seat adjustments' as in 1980) to the AIADMK from 1980–96.

In Punjab, J&K, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, and Assam, a Congress–Regional Party bipolarization came into existence over the 1967–89 period. While in the first three states, the Akali Dal, National Conference (NC) and Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) had a long history dating back to the first general elections and the liberation of Goa, in Andhra Pradesh and Assam, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) were born and emerged as significant parties in the 1980s.

In six small states, mainly in the North-Eastern Rim, viz., Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland, party systems took on a roughly Congress-versus-Regional Party configuration, but regional parties remained unstable and party systems still evolving. The normal process of party system evolution in the last three states mentioned, has experienced major interruptions due to insurgencies.

Finally, in the seven major states of UP, Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Orissa, the Congress remained in the 'traditional' mould up to but not including the state assembly elections of 1989–90, with no consolidation of the opposition behind a well-defined party or alliance, although such an anti-Congress front could have seriously challenged the Congress as in 1967 and 1977. This happened in the 1989–90 assembly elections with either the Janata Dal or the Janata Dal–BJP alliance displacing the Congress from the government in all these states except Karnataka.

However, just after the 1989 elections and the state assembly elections in early 1990, the Congress remained the leading party in more states (12) in terms of Lok Sabha seats and in terms of vote share (17) than any other, and remained one of the two leading parties in more states (20) in terms of Lok Sabha seats and vote share (24) than any other. In the state assemblies it remained the leading party in more states (9) and also in terms of vote share (11) than any other, and one of the two leading parties in terms of vote share in more states (24, or all except Tamil Nadu) than any other. However, many of these were very small states, the Congress

having lost UP, Bihar, Orissa, and Haryana to the Janata Dal, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh to the BJP, and Rajasthan and Gujarat to a Janata Dal–BJP coalition in both Lok Sabha and state assembly elections (except Haryana, which did not have assembly elections in 1989–90).

The Evolution of the Pattern of Fragmentation of the Party System 1989–99

The 1989 election results were not just another repeat of the broad-front anti-Congressism of the Janata Party kind, but signified a more far-reaching shift in the party system rooted in the shifts in party organizational strength and support bases at the state level in an increasing number of states, and in India's political economy and changing patterns of social mobilization. The big story of 1989–99 is the relative decline of the Congress and the rise of the BJP and regional or state-based parties. While the Congress retained a vote plurality in all five elections over 1989–99, it failed each time to translate that into a seat majority, falling behind the BJP in seats in 1996, 1998, and 1999.

Prior to 1989, the BJP and its predecessor the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), had never exceeded 10 per cent of the vote or 35 seats nationally, except for 1977 when as a component of the Janata Party it won 99 of 295 seats won by the Janata Party (more than the 86 seats it won in 1989). Its rise since then has been steady in terms of both vote and seat shares. It experienced a meteoric rise in seats from a derisory two in 1984 (despite 7.4 per cent votes) to 86 (out of 226 contested, mostly in *de facto* alliance with the Janata Dal) in 1989 owing to the combination of three effects—seat adjustments with the Janata Dal resulting in one-on-one contests against the Congress in most of the seats it contested in UP, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, a sizeable swing in its favour, and the regional concentration of this increase in votes.

In 1989–91, the BJP contested alone with a communally polarizing platform against the backdrop of the Babri Masjid agitation of the late 1980s, the upper caste backlash against the National

Front government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations for reservation of government jobs for backward classes defined in caste terms, and the Rath Yatra launched by L. K. Advani to 'liberate' the claimed 'Ram Janmabhoomi' inside the Babri Masjid and the communal tension and violence in its wake. Its vote share zoomed to 20.1 per cent, and it won 120 seats (of an unprecedented 468 contested), becoming the second largest party in terms of seats and votes. It swept the key state of UP in both the Lok Sabha and the simultaneous assembly elections, marking a major leap forward in its positioning in the party system. It swept Gujarat, decimating the Janata Dal there, and turned in strong performances in its traditional strongholds of MP, HP, and Rajasthan, winning over 40 per cent votes in each. More significantly, and portending developments to come, it significantly increased its vote share, in several states of the south and east, and in Bihar, contesting alone, and took 20.2 per cent of the vote and five seats in Maharashtra in alliance with the Shiv Sena.

The BJP came to form state governments on its own for the first time ever in 1990. It formed the government on its own in MP and HP, and formed coalition governments with the Janata Dal in Rajasthan and Gujarat, dominating the former with the state BJP leader becoming the chief minister. The only time that it had dominated state governments earlier was when it was part of the Janata Party in 1977–9, during which period the Jana Sangh component of the Janata Party dominated the government and occupied the chief minister's post in MP, HP, and Rajasthan. Thus the BJP arrived as a *regional* political force, whereas earlier it had essentially been sub-regional, thereby contributing to national party system fragmentation.

In 1991, with the support of the 11-member AIADMK and some smaller allies, the Congress was able to form a minority government dependent on abstention in confidence votes by a section of the opposition. It began adding to its numbers by splitting small parties such as the TDP and Ajit Singh's faction of the Lok Dal, itself a breakaway from the Janata Dal after its defeat in 1991, in fractions of one-third or more (legal under the Anti-Defection law), and attained a majority on its own exactly half-way through its term (end-1993). However, these manoeuvres did not help it rebuild a party that could come back to power on its own. In 1996,

its vote share declined still further to a then-historic low of 28.7 per cent, having been hit badly by the breaking away of the bulk of its Tamil Nadu unit to form the Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) which won 20 seats, and marginally by the breaking away of factions called the Congress (Tiwari) and the Madhya Pradesh Vikas Congress. For the first time, the Congress was overtaken as the single largest party, by the BJP, winning only 141 seats compared to the BJP's 161, although it remained the single largest party by vote share with 28.8 per cent compared to the BJP's 20.3 per cent.

In 1996, the BJP ran into the limits of contesting alone with a communally polarizing agenda. Despite being catapulted to its higher-ever seat tally of 161 seats, due to its more regionally concentrated vote, making it the largest party in the Lok Sabha and able to form the government for 13 days, its vote share remained stagnant at 20.3 per cent and it failed to win parliamentary support from enough other parties to form a minority or coalition government. Six states—UP (52), MP (27), Gujarat (16), Rajasthan (12), Bihar (18) in alliance with the Samata Party, and Maharashtra (18), in alliance with the Shiv Sena, accounted for 143 of its 161 seats, with UP and MP alone accounting for almost half.

These results can be seen as a delayed reflection of the realignment of political forces that was represented by the results of the elections to the assemblies of fifteen states between November 1993 and March 1995, which, by and large, represented major gains for the BJP, some regional parties like the TDP and Shiv Sena, and state-based parties such as the Samajwadi Party, the Samata Party and the BSP, while at best a holding operation for the Congress in some stronghold states such as HP and MP.[5] A United Front government consisting of nine parties participating in government, four parties formally part of the United Front (UF) coalition but not participating in government, and supported from outside by the Congress was formed in June 1996. The Congress with-drew support to Prime Minister Deve Gowda in April 1997, but continued to support the UF government after his

[5] Yogendra Yadav, 'Reconfiguration in Indian Politics: State Assembly Elections 1993–1995', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 31, nos 2–3, January 1996.

replacement as prime minister by I. K. Gujral, eventually withdrawing support to the UF in November 1997, precipitating fresh elections in February–March 1998.

The basic lesson of 1996 was clear. If the BJP had to come within striking distance of power, it had to be able to expand to non-traditional states, by alliances or otherwise, as well as expand its social base in its stronghold states. This was what it attempted to do in 1998 and 1999 by a significant shift in strategy consisting of seeking a wide range of alliances in its non-stronghold states, in the process shelving temporarily the main communally divisive points on its agenda, viz., construction of a Rama temple on the site of the demolished Babri Masjid, repeal of Article 370 (special autonomous status for Kashmir), and promulgation of a common civil code.

The 1998 election was different because of the BJP shelving its overt Hindutva agenda to strike explicit or tacit alliances with a range of state-based parties, both regional and other, many of them earlier with the UF, a strategy that it consolidated after its victory. The BJP strategy was certainly helped by the fact that the Congress had toppled the UF government and was the principal opponent of the constituents of the UF in several major states including West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Assam, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. Thus, in 1998, the BJP contested the elections with as many as 13 pre-election allies, including two Independents, with seat-sharing arrangements spread over nine states. These were the Akali Dal and Independent S. S. Kainth (Punjab), Samata Party (Bihar and UP), Independent Maneka Gandhi (UP), Haryana Vikas Party (HVP-Haryana), Biju Janata Dal (BJP-Orissa), Trinamool Congress (West Bengal), Lok Shakti (Karnataka), and AIADMK, Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Tamizhaga Rajiv Congress and Janata Party (all Tamil Nadu). The BJP won 25.5 per cent votes and its allies 11.6 per cent, votes, totalling 37.1 per cent for the alliance, and won a total of 254 seats. The BJP got 182 seats and its allies 76 seats, of which were distributed as: Samanta Party 12, BJD 9, AIADMK 18, PMK 4, MDMK 3, Tanizhaga Rajiv Congress (TRC) 1, Janata Party 1, Akali Dal 8, Shiv Sena 6, Lok Shakti 3, Trinamool Congress 7, HVP 1, BJP-allied Independents 3. This catapulted the BJP to power as it emerged once again as the single largest party (the Congress got only 141 seats) and led the single largest

pre-election alliance. With the help of 24 post-election adherents from seven parties and two nominated members it grew to 282, but this included the 12-member TDP and 2-member NC which supported it from outside only.[6]

State-wise, the BJP fared better in 1998 compared to 1996 due to the crucial support of its allies. It won more seats in all states except Haryana, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, and enjoyed a positive vote swing in all states except Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Meghalaya. In some states, notably Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Karnataka, and Punjab, it turned in its best-ever performance in seats, and except for the last two, in votes too, marking a major penetration of the south and Orissa, and winning its first ever seat in West Bengal. Geographically and socially, the BJP spread its influence and consolidated itself in new areas and new social groups in the 1990s, in the south and east, among lower castes and classes.[7] Viewed over 1989–99, this expansion has been at the expense, primarily, of the Janata Dal, which appears to have been the loser in seat adjustments or alliances it had with the BJP in 1989, the BJP displacing the Janata Dal almost completely in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and marginalizing it in UP, and secondarily of the Congress, principally in UP and Bihar.

A BJP-led, ideologically diverse, minority coalition government consisting of 13 pre-election (including two Independents) and nine post-election allies (including five one-MP parties), and dependent on the support or abstention in confidence votes of at least the TDP and the NC, assumed power in March 1998.

In 1999, essentially the same BJP-led pre-election coalition fought the Congress-led coalition, the latter being a more tentative coalition with state-by-state agreements but no common national platform. The United Front disintegrated, being reduced to the Left Front and the rump Janata Dal (Secular) of Deve Gowda. The 24-party BJP-led alliance, formally christened the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), consisted of the BJP, Shiv Sena,

[6] For details of the alliances, pre- and post-election, in 1998, see Balveer Arora, 'Negotiating Differences: federal coalitions and national cohesion' in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava, Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 184–5, 190, 194.

[7] See Oliver Heath, 'Anatomy of BJP's Rise to Power', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 34, nos 34–5, 21–8 August 1999.

Akali Dal, Samata Party, Lok Shakti, Janata Dal (Sharad Yadav group) (the later three agreeing to formally merge to from the Janata Dal-United), TDP, DMK, MDMK, PMK, TRC, MGR-ADMK, MGR-Kazhagam, BJD, Trinamool Congress, Sikkim Democratic Front, Arunachal Congress, Manipur State Congress Party, Loktantrik Congress, Janatantrik BSP, Himachal Vikas Congress, Indian National Lok Dal, Democratic Bahujan Samaj Morcha, Independent (Maneka Gandhi). The Congress and allies consisted of: Congress, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), AIADMK, Kerala Congress (Mani), Muslim League, and Rashtriya Lok Dal. The main differences were that the BJP was now allied to Chautala's Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) in Haryana and the DMK in Tamil Nadu while the Congress was allied to the AIADMK.

The NDA won a more decisive victory getting 299 of the 537 seats (six seats were deferred), with the BJP alone getting 182 as in 1998. With post-election adherents like the NC the number went up to 305. The Congress got a lowest-ever 111 seats, and only 134 with its allies. The Left got 42 seats, the BSP 14, and Others 48. However, in terms of vote share, the BJP declined to 23.8 per cent while the Congress rose to 28.4 per cent, remaining the single largest party. The NDA formed the government with the 29-member TDP opting to support it from outside. However, it will take at least two allies together to reduce the government to a minority. So although the BJP's share of the NDA is less than in 1998, the NDA is less vulnerable to toppling.

The state-wise pattern testifies to the importance of alliances for the BJP's and NDA's performance. Alliances critically helped the BJP and its allies in Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra (aided by the Congress split), Haryana, HP, and even in UP. The Congress improved its vote share in most major states except Orissa, most notably in UP from 6 per cent to 14.8 per cent, but could not translate this increase into seats, except in UP, from none to 10, and in Punjab and Karnataka. It remains one of the two leading parties, or leading party in one of the two leading alliances, in 18 states.

Four types of states, by party system polarity, emerged during the 1990s. First, most states remained bipolar, if not two-party, systems, by seat and vote share. The established two-party states that continued in the same pattern were HP, MP, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, Established bipolar states were those in which

either two alliances or one party opposed by an alliance of two or more smaller parties, dominated the political space. These states were West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura (Congress or Congress-led coalition versus Left Front), Maharashtra, and Punjab (Congress versus BJP–Regional Party coalition).

Second, there were states with three or more poles which seemed to be collapsing into bipolarity due to newly forged alliances, sometimes as a result of splits in existing parties, such as Karnataka, Bihar, and Orissa.

Third, a state like UP where a four-cornered contest continued, with the BJP as the dominant pole, having achieved that position in 1991.

Fourth, in a number of apparently bipolar or two-party states, *if we look at the vote shares, we find the presence of a significant, often growing, third party* which has a vote share in double digits but not yet large enough to win significant number of seats. *It is obviously cutting into the potential vote share of one or both of the two main parties or alliances in a way that makes it both a threat to either/both of the former as well as attractive as an ally of one to defeat the other.* This is the case in states like Assam, Orissa, Goa, West Bengal, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh. This rising third party was the BJP in all of these states, and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Punjab, UP, and in a small way, MP. The BJP, as a rising third party since its 1989 seat adjustments with the then much larger Janata Dal, has emerged as a significant state party in several states in three ways.

First, by displacing and decimating the Janata Dal as the major non-Congress force and occupying the place of one of the two dominant parties in a two-party system like in Rajasthan and Gujarat since 1991, or even becoming the dominant pole displacing both the Janata Dal and its offshoots and the Congress, such as in UP since 1991.

Second, by emerging as a significant third party in vote share at the state level and, hence, both threatening to cut into the votes and seat prospects of either or both of the dominant parties, and hence *creating incentives for the weaker of the two leading parties to ally with it, typically the regional party*, since both the BJP, nationally, and the regional party in the state, face the Congress as their principal opponent. This is the pattern in Maharashtra, Punjab, Orissa, Goa, Bihar (its alliance with the Samata works

both ways for it and the Samata), West Bengal (following the Congress split in which the Trinamool Congress emerged as the major Congress faction), Haryana, Karnataka (following the emergence of Lok Shakti after the Janata Dal split, though this works both ways as in Bihar), and in 1999, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura. In some of these states, possibly Maharashtra and Orissa, the BJP can potentially go on to eat up the share of its regional alliance partner and transform the state into a Congress–BJP two-party state as happened in Rajasthan and Gujarat over 1989–91.

Third, there are states where the BJP still is a minor force, but where it can potentially repeat the story of the above states.

Thus a process of bipolar consolidation has been taking place in many states, but of *multiple bipolarities* (for example, Congress–BJP, Congress–Left, Congress–Regional Party), contributing to fragmentation at the national level, on the one hand, and fragmentation and transformation of two-party (for example, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh) and two-alliance systems (Tamil Nadu, West Bengal) at the state level in other states, contributing directly or indirectly to potential bipolar consolidation of a Congress-led alliance versus BJP-led alliance type at the national level on other hand.

The Evolution of Electoral Alliances and Competing Explanations for Fragmentation (and Reconsolidation?) of the Party System

There are, broadly, seven explanations for the fragmentation of the Congress-dominated national party system over the decades, none of which excludes the other. *One of these can also potentially explain the process of reconsolidation of the party system into one with larger alliances and fewer poles.* We shall outline the competing explanations, in roughly chronological order of their beginning to be applicable to the decline of the Congress-dominated party system. We shall then outline the evolution of alliances drawing on the patterns of fragmentation and possible reconsolidation in the earlier sections, and finally make an argument for the best explanation for the process has been unfolding.

The first (set of) explanation (s) is centred on the growing politicization of social cleavages along regional lines since the late

1960s due to the increasing centralization of the Congress party and Congress governments, and the insensitivity to regional concerns about language, cultural identity, political autonomy, and economic development, leading to the rise and/or further consolidation of regional parties such as the DMK and its offshoots, Akali Dal, National Conference, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), and small parties in the North-Eastern Rim.[8]

The second explanation is that of the electoral–systemic feature of delinking between parliamentary and state assembly elections since 1971. This probably facilitated pre-electoral alliances and post-electoral coalitions of the non-Congress forces for national elections such as in 1977 and 1989, and of the non-BJP forces in 1996, since doing so became easier without compromising their fundamental interests at the state level where their basic social constituencies and power base lay. Delinking also meant smaller agendas and less crowded bargaining tables, and hence less insurmountable collective action problems, or to put it simply, one-at-a-time battles with the Congress.[9]

The third explanation emphasizes the growth in political consciousness and assertion of newly prosperous or newly mobilized sections of the electorate, primarily intermediate and backward caste peasants in the Green Revolution areas of north India, both as a farmer's and intermediate castes' lobby from the late sixties to the early nineties.[10] These castes had not been part

[8] For a concise overview of regional parties in the party system up to the mid-1990s, see James Manor, 'Regional Parties in Federal Systems', in Douglas Verney and Balveer Arora (eds), *Multiple Identities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in a Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Konark, 1995).

[9] See Pradeep Chibber, *Democracy Without Associations* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1999), p. 105.

[10] See Paul Brass, 'The Politicization of the Peasantry in a North Indian State: I and II', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vols 7 and 8, nos 4 and 1, July 1980 and October 1980, for Uttar Pradesh; Ranbir Singh, 'Changing Social Bases of Congress Political Support in Haryana', in Richard Sisson and Ramashray Roy (eds), *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Sage, 1990); Francine R. Frankel, 'Middle Classes and Castes in India's Politics: Prospects for Political Accommodation', in Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1991), and 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar: Breakdown of the Brahmanical Social Order', in Francine R. Frankel and M. S. A. Rao (eds), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, vol. I (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

of the core base of the Congress in the northern belt and had not been granted a position of commensurate influence in the party power structure. Fragmentation, whereby these castes or interest groups tended to vote or form new parties of the erstwhile socialist (Praja Socialist Party-PSP/Samyukta SocialistParty-SSP)/ agrarian Lok Dal/Janata Dal kind, was rooted in the inability or unwillingness of the groups that controlled the Congress to accommodate them.

The fourth explanation, dovetailing with the first and third, and complementary to them, is that of the growing centralization of, and suspension of democracy within, the Congress party since 1972, leading to the exit of those traditional voters and politicians whose voices were not being heard, particularly certain regional groups and intermediate and backward caste farmers in the northern belt, to new or other parties. This is in line with the logic of 'disillusioned' voting whereby voters of a party from whom they fail to get their desired policy dividends, or have their voices heard, turn away to rival or new parties. This explanation stresses the importance of the *organization and functioning of parties as machines* to retain and expand their voter base.[11]

The fifth explanation is that of the influence on incentives of a systemic feature of the polity, the division of powers in the Constitution between the Centre and the states. With the powers that are more relevant to the daily lives of the people in a largely rural society, such as agriculture and land, irrigation and water supply, electricity, policy, education, health, and other social expenditures, being vested in the states, there are incentives to organize for capture of power at the state level.[12]

The sixth explanation is that of the growing politicization of communal and caste cleavages in the 1990s, leading to the collapse

[11] See Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), for an analysis of the 'crisis of governability' centred on the centralization of the Congress party. This argument gells with Riker's ideal type of disillusioned voting, in William A. Riker, 'The Number of Political Parties: A Re-examination of Duverger's Law', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1976. See Pradeep Chibber, *Democracy Without Associations*, op. cit., Chapter 5, for an argument emphasizing exit of traditional supporters of the Congress rather than the entry of the new groups into politics.

[12] See Pradeep Chibber, *Democracy Without Associations*, op. cit., Chapters 2 and 5.

of a catchall party like the Congress in states like UP, and Bihar, where such politicization led to a collapse of the middle ground, and the gravitation of the vote, particularty Scheduled Castes, Muslims, OBCs and upper castes, to communal and caste-based parties such as the BJP, Shiv Sena, BSP, Samajwadi Party, and RJD (in Bihar).[13]

The seventh explanation, which we consider the most comprehensive and powerful, is one which attaches greatest significance, not to social cleavages or to the dominant Congress party's structure and functioning, but to the *systemic properties of the first-past-the-post electoral system working themselves out in a federal polity*.[14] This is reinforced by the second (the delinking of national and state elections since 1971) and fifth (the division of powers making state-level power politically attractive). This explanation is based on the proposition known as Duverger's law, viz. that the first-past-the-post system (single member-district, simple plurality system) tends towards a two-party system because of the tendency over time for third and more parties to get eliminated due to the combination of two effects—a 'mechanical effect' of over-representation or under-representation of parties, depending on whether they get more or less than a certain (varying) threshold of votes; and a 'psychological effect' whereby voters tend to not 'waste' their votes on parties which have no realistic chance but vote 'sophisticatedly' (or strategically/tactically) for the party which they feel has the best chance of defeating their least-liked party. These two effects taken in combination will tend to aggregate

[13] For a general analysis of the decline of the Congress and the emergence of a post-Congress polity, see Yogendra Yadav, 'Electoral Politics in the Time of Change: India's Third Electoral System, 1989–99', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 34, nos 34–5, 21–8 August 1999. For specifics that show the polarization of the vote by community and caste, see Oliver Heath 'Anatomy of BJP's Rise to Power', op. cit., for the BJP vote, and Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav, 'The United Colours of Congress: Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 34, nos 34–5, 21–8 August 1999. See Kanchan Chandra, 'Mobilizing the Excluded', *Seminar*, August 1999, for an analysis of the rise of the BSP.

[14] See E. Sridharan, 'Duverger's Law, Its Reformulations and the Evolution of the Indian Party System', Centre for Policy Research, May 1997, and IRIS India Working Paper No. 35, February 1997, IRIS Center, University of Maryland, for a detailed version of the argument presented here in capsule form.

votes around the leading party and its principal rival. Duverger's law argues that the *first-post-the-post system produces an imperative of consolidation* of voters (and politicians) around a principal rival party to have a realistic chance of winning against a dominant party, thus leading to the elimination of third parties or at least an alliance of other parties against a leading party.

Duverger's law applies essentially at the constituency level. It need not translate to the national level and produce a national two-party system where strong state parties exist as in a federal polity, particularly one like India's where the states are linguistic and cultural entities reflecting such social cleavages. In such a system, where parties compete for forming the government at both national and state levels, Duverger's law can apply at the state level, leading to two-party or bipolar systems at the state level due to the consolidation of the opposition to the principal party in the state level, whether a national or regional party, in a principal rival, while at the same time leading to a multi-party system nationally because the state-level two-party systems do not consist of the same two parties. Indeed, they can consist of a variety of parties, some national, some purely state-level. The consolidation of two-party or two-alliance systems at the state level which we have described in the foregoing sections is the playing out of Duverger's law in practice.

The first, third, and sixth explanations are all variants of the social cleavage theory of party systems which postulates that parties will be formed around social cleavages and the party system will reflect this in its axes of polarization.

The second, fifth, and seventh explanations relate to the behavioural incentives set up by the systemic features of the political system, the second and seventh relating to the electoral system specifically, with the seventh specifying a mechanism whereby behaviour of politicians, voters, and parties determine the change in the party system over time.

The fourth explanation focuses on political parties as machines and is intermediate between social cleavage theories and political–systemic theories.

Let us take an overview of the evolution of alliances before coming back to the competing explanations. The evolution of alliances began with broad-front anti-Congressism in the immediate pre-1967 period, promoted by the socialist ideologue, Ram

Manohar Lohia. As long as the Congress got around 40 per cent of the vote nationally and a similar share in most states, and as long as other parties received only a fraction of that nationally and much less than the Congress at the state level, the only way to dislodge the Congress was a broad anti-Congress front, howsoever disparate in ideological and social terms. In 1967, the Congress received a bare majority in Parliament and lost power in eight major states. In most of these, anti-Congress coalitions called Samyukta Vidhayak Dals (SVD) formed the government for at least some of the period between 1967 and 1974 (there were mid-term elections in four states in 1969).

These were the first wave of anti-Congress coalitions (barring a few earlier ones such as in Kerala). However, they were highly disparate in ideological terms, some being *coalitions of the ideological extremes* as in the case of the Akali Dal–Jana Sangh–CPI coalition in Punjab in 1967–9, and were extremely vulnerable to splits and defections. Most of the components of these coalitions were either parties based on the emerging rich peasantry of the intermediate castes such as the socialist parties and Charan Singh's Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) in UP and Bihar, which were at odds with the traditional upper- and landowning caste-dominated Congress, or the Hindu chauvinist Jana Sangh, or the CPI, or breakaway factions of disgruntled Congressmen. There was no ideological policy, or social glue which held together these alliances, only the necessity to hang together for power; hence, their instability. These were essentially post-election alliances. It was only in some states in 1967 and 1969 that such broad-front anti-Congress pre-election alliances were put together.

The next stage in the evolution of alliances was the unification of some political parties which had been partners in the SVD coalitions in the states in the 1967–74 period, in the context of the extra-parliamentary protest movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1974–5. In 1974, the Charan Singh-led BKD, based primarily on intermediate caste peasant proprietors in UP, merged with the SSP (Raj Narain), Swatantra Party, Utkal Congress, and three minor parties to form the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD).

The next stage came in the post-Emergency 1977 elections with the formation of the Janata Party which came into being with the merger of the BLD, the Congress (O), the Socialist Party, the Jagjivan Ram-led Congress for Democracy, and the Jana Sangh.

The collapse and splintering of the Janata Party and the resurgence of the Congress in 1980 to form a majority government for the entire 1980s set back the process of broad-front anti-Congressism. However, it continued in certain states like Haryana, where the Lok Dal and the BJP formed an electoral alliance to defeat the Congress in 1987.

Alliance formation resumed in the late 1980s with the formation of the Janata Dal in 1988 by expelled Congressman V. P. Singh, merging his supporters with the Lok Dals of both Ajit Singh and Devi Lal in north India, and with the Janata Party of R. K. Hegde in Karnataka. A broad anti-Congress informal coalition for seat adjustment for the 1989 elections so as to give the Congress one-on one opposition at the constituency level, state-by-state, was put together.

This was a two-level alliance. The first level was a formal coalition, the National Front, consisting of the Janata Dal and four others parties, the three regional parties, TDP, DMK, and AGP, and the Congress (Socialist). The second level was a more informal seat adjustment between the National Front and BJP on the one hand (Rajasthan, Gujarat, UP, Haryana) and the Left parties on the other, even though the Left and the BJP were poles apart. However, even the National Front stopped short of a 1977-style merger. Nor was it a purely power-seeking opportunistic coalition of the post-1967 SVD type, ignoring ideological differences. In fact, it remained a coalition of independent parties with a joint manifesto, limiting itself to seat adjustments state-by-state with the second level of the alliance, the BJP and Left, but agreeing to disagree on key ideological issues. The government formed in 1989–90 was also of this type, with the BJP and the Left supporting it from the outside. This set the stage for the alliances of the 1990s.

The 1991 election saw a three-cornered contest with roughly the same electoral alliances contesting, viz., the National Front comprising the Janata Dal, regional and Left parties, versus the BJP and the Congress, with the rump Samajwadi Janata Party (of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar) as a minor fourth side, the main difference from 1989 being that the BJP contested alone and not in adjustment with the Janata Dal.

In 1996 again, the same three-cornered battle resulted in a broad front, post-election coalition government of UF, again constituted by Janata family parties, regional and Left parties, dependent on support from their political rival, the Congress, in order to offer

an alternative to the perceivedly extremist, 'anti-system' BJP. This coalition's dependence on the Congress for support made it inherently unstable given that the Congress was the principal political opponent of many of the UF's constituent parties in their home states, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and the three Left stronghold states. However, it should be noted that the BJP was not totally isolated, having an ideologically compatible ally in Maharashtra (Shiv Sena) and managing to forge alliances with splinter parties from the Janata family in Bihar (Samata) and Haryana (Haryana Vikas Party) and with the Akali Dal in Punjab; earlier, in 1995, it had formed a short-lived alliance with the BSP, which formed the government for four months, exploiting the SP–BSP breakup.

In 1998, the BJP realized the limits of Hindutva and the need to expand geographically to the south and east and socially downwards to the backward and Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and poor. It successfully overcame its isolation by managing to exploit splits in the Congress (in West Bengal where it made seat adjustments with the breakaway Trinamool Congress) and Janata Dal (in Karnataka with Hegde's Lok Shakti, and in Orissa with the Biju Janata Dal), growing beyond its alliances in Punjab (Akali Dal), Maharashtra (Shiv Sena), and Bihar (Samata). Most importantly, it made inroads into Tamil Nadu with an alliance with the AIADMK-led group of regional parties, exploiting state-level rivalries in all cases. At the state level, which was the significant level for these alliances, the newly 'moderate' BJP became an attractive partner for a regional or state-based party opposed to the Congress or Congress-allied regional rival (Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Haryana, Orissa) or to a Congress faction (Trinamool Congress) versus the major regional party (West Bengal). *The logic of the enemy's enemy being one's friend overpowered the ideological incompatibility between these centrist, secular parties, and the BJP's ideology*. However, when it came to government formation the BJP-led coalition government adopted a National Agenda for Governance in which the BJP's Hindutva agenda items were dropped. Thus the BJP had to pay the price of at least tactical and temporary moderation to sustain the alliance. With this modified stand, it managed to win post-election allies (Chautala's Haryana Lok Dal) and external supporters (TDP, NC) for its coalition government.

In 1999, the BJP managed to sustain and expand the same coalition, now formally called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) (adding the TDP, Goa's MGP, and the Patel faction of the Karnataka Janata Dal), in some cases switching partners, most dramatically in Tamil Nadu (to the DMK) and Haryana (to Chautala's INLD against erstwhile ally Bansi Lal's HVP). Again, the logic of the enemy's enemy being a friend worked against the Congress in most of the south and east where the Congress was one of the two principal parties facing a regional or state-based third party, the latter finding it expedient to ally with the BJP to add the latter's vote share to its kitty. However, again the BJP had to formally moderate its stand in the common NDA manifesto, shelving Hindutva issues, in order to forge and sustain such alliances.

The evolution of alliances in the Indian party system can be summarized as follows. The first phase of broad-front anti-Congressism in the 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by *intra-state alliances* of the SVD type or the Janata Party, where within each state, the component parties of the alliance or the Janata party, for example, the Jana Sangh, BKD/BLD, Socialists, Swatantra, Congress (O), had their state units, strongholds, and interests while having no ideological glue. The second phase, again of broad-front anti-Congressism, was that of the Janata Party, which unified ideologically disparate non-Congress parties so as to have one-on-one contests aggregating votes at the constituency level so as to win, reflecting the imperative of aggregation to win regardless of ideology. This also consisted of intra-state alliances of disparate parties within the overall umbrella of unification of those parties at the national level. Intra-state alliances cannot be stable unless there is *both an ideological and programmatic compatibility and an intra-state spatial compatibility* in that some of the parties have pockets of strength within the state which are not contested by their allies in the state; this applies in both the classic case of Kerala (for both the Left and the Congress) and in West Bengal. This spatial alliance was also fundamentally different from that of the Congress and AIADMK from 1977–96 in that this was not based on a trade-off of state assembly seats for Lok Sabha seats between the national and regional parties.

The National Front coalition was a new departure in three senses. First, learning from the Janata experience, it did not try

to unify very different parties but put together a coalition of distinct parties based on a common manifesto. Second, it brought in the explicitly regional parties like the DMK, TDP, and AGP, and the Left parties, unlike the SVD or Janata phase experiments. Third, it also marked the beginning of *inter-state alliances* of parties or *spatially compatible alliances* where parties do not compete on each other's turf. However, the spatially compatible loose alliance put together by the National Front–BJP–Left in 1989–90 foundered on the rock of ideological incompatibility. This indicated once again *the unsustainability of a broad anti-Congress coalition unless its ideological extremes moderated or set aside their position* (as the Jana Sangh did in the post-1967 SVD coalitions and in the post-1977 Janata phase). Another clear case of a *spatially compatible alliance* was the post-election coalition of the UF during 1996–8; however, it had a certain secular ideological mooring, ranged as it was against a hardline, perceivedly 'anti-system' BJP.

The period since 1991 has also seen the growth and sustenance of *intra-state alliances based on ideology* (like the BJP–Shiv Sena) and based on spatial compatibility of two kinds, different from both the Left Front kind and the Congress–AIADMK trade-off kind of 1977–96. This consists of *intra-state alliances which are a reverse of the historical Congress–AIADMK kind* in which there is no trade-off of Lok Sabha for state assembly seats between the regional and national parties. On the contrary, the regional party allies with the state unit of the national party with the *regional party getting the lion's share of both Lok Sabha and assembly seats*. The examples are the BJP–AIADMK–smaller parties in 1998, the BJP–DMK–smaller parties in 1999, the BJP–TDP in 1999, the BJP–Trinamool Congress in 1999, BJP–BJD in Orissa in 1998 and 1999, the BJP–HVP in 1996 and 1998, and the BJP–INLD (Chautala) in 1999, and also the BJP–Shiv Sena since 1991.

There is also the reverse of this pattern, viz., *an alliance between a minor state party and a national party in which the latter gets the lion's share of both Lok Sabha and assembly seats*, the key being spatial compatibility in which the national party does not contest in the smaller regional party's intra-state strongholds. Examples are the BJP–Lok Shakti in Karnataka in 1998 and 1999, the BJP–Samata in Bihar over 1996–9, the BJP–Himachal Vikas Congress (HVC) in HP. It is anybody's guess how long these

non-ideological alliances will last. In some of these cases, the base of the smaller party, or even the regional party which is a senior partner, may be eaten up by a larger, better-organized party like the BJP, as in fact happened to the Janata Dal in Rajasthan and Gujarat from 1989 to 1991. *The clear emphasis of alliances in the nineties has been on spatial compatibility at the expense of ideological compatibility*, particularly the BJP's alliances of 1998 and 1999, but even the UF coalition. This is an improvement on the SVD and Janata Party alliances which were neither programmatic nor spatially compatible. However, *the most important point to be noted is that in the whole history of alliances since the 1960s, with the exception of the Left Front limited to three states, alliances have been driven by the imperative to aggregate votes to win and not by ideology, programme or social cleavages.*[15]

With this observation we return to the competing explanations for fragmentation and reconsolidation of the party system. It is clear that the explanations deriving from the social cleavage theory of party systems, that is the first, third, and sixth explanations, can explain fragmentation of certain kinds. The first can explain the shift away from the Congress to regional parties in certain states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Punjab, and J&K and the North-Eastern Rim states, including the formation of such parties as in the case of Assam. The third can explain the shift of votes away from or consolidation behind the agrarian parties of the Janata family from the BKD, Socialists, BLD, Lok Dals, Janata Dal, and so forth, again including the formation of new parties. The sixth explanation can account for the rise of communal and caste-based parties like the BJP, Shiv Sena, BSP, and Samajwadi Party including the formation of new parties. The fourth explanation can explain the exit of former Congress voters to rival or new parties. The fifth explanation reinforces these in that it explains the incentives for regional or single state-based party formation. The second further reinforces these by explaining how delinked state assembly elections facilitate collective action for alliances.

[15] For a detailed overview of state-level coalition politics in India, see E. Sridharan, 'Principles, Power and Coalition Politics in India: Lessons from Theory, Comparison and Recent History', in D. D. Khanna and Gert W. Kueck (eds), *Principles, Power and Politics* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1999).

However, while these explanations can account for various types of fragmentation they cannot explain the periodic counter-tendencies towards alliances that tend to reconsolidate the party system. It is here that we find the seventh explanation, based on Duverger's analysis of the systemic properties and imperatives of the first-past-the-post electoral system useful. This seventh explanation can account for *both fragmentation at the national level and tendencies towards alliances*. The key point here is to remember from the account of the first two sections that *fragmentation of the party system at the national level is a product of its opposite at the state level*, that is, the concentration of vote share between two parties or alliances, but *different* pairs of parties or alliances in most states, leading to a multitude of parties at the national level, each with a limited base in one or a few states. The latter phenomenon is explained by the systemic tendencies of the first-past-the-post system captured by Duverger's law, working themselves out at the state level since 1967. The *seventh explanation also fits well with the tendencies towards broad alliances driven, as we have seen, overwhelmingly by the imperative to consolidate votes, rather than by ideology, programme, or social cleavages.*

We can conclude that the Indian party system is evolving over successive elections and the various trends and counter-trends will play themselves out over the coming years. It is too early to say whether the inexorable imperative to aggregate votes regardless of ideology will push the national party system to evolve towards loose bipolarity at the national level between two broad spatially compatible alliances, one broadly left and the other broadly right of centre, or whether India's multiple social cleavages intertwined with geographical diversity will prevail to create so diversified an ideological space that bipolar consolidation is impossible at the national level.[16]

[16] Ordeshook and Shvetsova 'Ethnic Heterogeneity District Magnitude and the Number of Parties' in American Journal of Political Science, 38, 4 (February) 1994, argue that Duverger's law will work even under conditions of social (ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc.) heterogeneity, while Taagepera and Shugart, in *Seats and Votes*, op. cit., tend to argue that the effective number of parties will increase with the increase in social heterogeneity.

16

Political Parties and the Party System: The Emergence of New Coalitions[+]

Balveer Arora

Changes in the party system have profoundly altered the working of the Constitution over the last fifty years. They have transformed the functioning of state institutions. In fact, it is well recognized that the political process, which is principally animated by political parties, is a powerful instrument of constitutional change. Through the establishment of precedents and then conventions, political institutions are impacted by the behaviour of parties, their mobilization strategies, and their modes of internal functioning.

Fifty years ago, there were significant differences between the inspiration for the original design for a federal democracy and what was finally retained in the Constitution. The promise had been that of a rainbow polity, but the reality that emerged was a truncated India and the dominance of a majoritarian centralist party. Even while a broad consensus in favour of the basic values of secular democracy and a composite culture existed within dominant segments of the political class, many scholars expressed their concern at the fragile institutional foundations of this edifice, which could be subverted and transformed with relative ease.

In the following sections, we first look at the various stages in the development of the party system and their impact on political institutions before analysing the developments since the defeat of

[+] An earlier version was first published in Subhash C. Kashyap, D. D. Khanna and Gert W. Kueck (eds), *Reviewing the Constitution?* (New Delhi: Shipra, 2000).

the Congress party in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections. In the third section, we look at a few of the institutional dimensions of the problem and possible responses, before concluding with some reflections on the emergence of new coalitions and the party system as it obtains in the closing years of the twentieth century.

I

A literal reading of the Indian Constitution can be misleading for comprehending the extent to which regional identities, and by implication federalism, have taken root in contemporary political life through the operation of the party system. Though it has been amended eighty-three times in fifty years, the Constitution still does not reflect these changed political realities which have modified the 'strong Centre' framework by placing *de facto* curbs on the Centre's sweeping powers of unilateral initiative and intervention. The economic reforms of the 1990s have further strengthened this trend by assigning a greater role and enhanced responsibilities to the states.

In the development of the party system, federal nationalism has played a major role. As a concept, it arises from the linkages of nationalism with democracy on the one hand, and with federalism on the other. Federal nationalism is, in essence, an integrative force deriving its strength from power sharing through structures of democratic self-governance which give adequate space and voice to subnational identities. Its promise arises from the fact that it is a democratic union based on the subordination of subnationalisms to a wider allegiance. Its capacity to deliver depends on the extent to which it succeeds in operationalizing its federal democracy component through the party system and political processes.

The end of Congress party dominance and the lack of a clear single-party majority since the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 ushered in an era of coalition politics in the context of a fragmented party system. The growth and increased prominence of state-based or regional parties introduced a new element in the working of the federal system. It engendered new conventions which sought to enhance the participation of the states in national policy making. Table 16.1 attempts to recapitulate the defining moments in this evolution, each situated in a specific context and symbolized by certain texts which are important reference points

TABLE 16.1: Turning Points in the Development of the Party System (1949–99)

Transitions	Context	Significant texts	Outcome
1946–9	Culmination of national movement, transfer of power and partition.	Constituent Assembly debates and the 1950 Constitution.	Strong Centre framework: Congress party dominance.
1966–9	Congress mini-mutinies and split, emergence of strong state parties via defections from the Congress.	Rajamannar Committee Report (1971); Kesavanand Bharati Judgement (1973).	Congress dominance wanes, though Congress order is apparently restored.
1976–9	National Emergency and consolidation of opposition to authoritarian centralism.	West Bengal Memo on Centre–state Relations; Ashok Mehta Report; Anandpur Sahib Resolution; Mandal Report	First non-Congress government at the Centre; Restoration of judicial authority and basic structure of the Constitution.
1983–5	Crisis of centralized governance as state parties gain in Andhra, Assam, Punjab, Kashmir, and the North-East	Sarkaria Commission Report on Centre–state Relations; Anti-Defection Act.	Turmoil in the states amidst stability at the Centre: anti-central intervention and pro-states' participation parties gain ground.
1989–93	Concurrent implementation of Mandal and Hindutva agendas; renovation of panchayats and economic reform.	73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments; Vohra Committee Report on Criminalization of Politics.	Decline of Congress and fragmentation of party system; advent of new coalitions.

for understanding these shifts in the politics of representation and seeks to capture the essence of the change that each of these important transitions produced.

As the polity moved towards a more participatory federal democracy, the dominant Congress party revealed itself to be out of tune with the aspirations of the new segments entering the political process. The real rupture took place with the Emergency (1975–7) which exposed the limits of authoritarian centralism. It also led to an unprecedented bonding of non-Congress forces, which managed to cohabit briefly in the first Janata experiment (1977–9) before falling apart again. However, the links forged during this period proved to be durable, and many of the members of the National Democratic Alliance first came together at that time.

The political fortunes of the Congress began to decline in the 1980s, though the exceptional circumstances of the 1984 election obscured this at the time. As Table 16.2 shows, the losses of the Congress were mopped up only partially by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which failed to keep pace with the rate of decline, and state parties seeking to constitute a 'Third Force' moved into the breach. The decline in the seat-share of the five major national parties which dominated the political scene during the 1980s is striking.

Few constitutionalists would argue today that India's political system is not truly federal. They would, however, notice a gap between the 'quasi-federal' Constitution, which has scarcely been amended in this regard, and the reality. This new reality owes its existence primarily to the increased importance and expanding role of state-based political parties, and the necessity of building federal coalitions which reconcile regional aspirations with national cohesion.[1]

Assessing the centralizing and decentralizing trends in the mid-1990s, Paul Brass asserts: 'My own prediction is that regional forces will ultimately prevail and that there is now a genuine possibility that effective regional autonomy will come to all the states, not just to Kashmir.' He also draws our attention to 'a vital aspect of Indian

[1] Balveer Arora, 'Regional Aspirations and National Cohesion: Federal Coalitions in the 1998 Lok Sabha Elections', in S. K. Chambe and Susheela Kaushik (eds), *Indian Democracy at the Turn of the Century* (New Delhi: Kanishka, 1999).

TABLE 16.2: Lok Sabha Elections 1977–99: Results for Five Main National Parties

Parties election year	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999
Total no. of seats	542	529	542	529	511	543	543	543
Indian National Congress	154	353	415	197	227	140	141	114
Bharatiya Janata Party	@	@	02	85	119	161	182	182
Janata Party/Janata Dal	298	31	10	143	56	46	06	21*
Communist Party (Marxist)	22	36	22	33	35	32	32	33
Communist Party of India	07	11	06	12	13	12	09	04
Total five national parties	*481*	*431*	*455*	*470*	*450*	*391*	*370*	*354*
% of total seats	*88.8*	*81.5*	*84.0*	*88.9*	*88.1*	*72.0*	*68.1*	*65.2*

Sources: For the 1977–91 results: Subrata K. Mitra and James Chiriyankandath (eds), *Electoral Politics in India* (New Delhi: Segment, 1992), and Election Commission, *Reports for 1996–9*.

@ The BJP was a constituent of the Janata Party in these elections.

* The Janata Dal (United) included Samata Party (Bihar) and Lok Shakthi (Karnataka).

political and cultural life, namely that there is a strong sense of national identity among important, élite segments of society *everywhere in India* and a desire to maintain the unity of the Indian state, and to strengthen it in order to maintain its place in the current world order, sentiments which are most effectively articulated by the BJP'.[2] Brass rightly stresses that these élite segments are pan-Indian: they comprise presumably the political class, the higher (all-India) civil services, and the armed forces.

However, he is perhaps overstating the correspondence between this feeling of national identity and the BJP's understanding of it, as articulated in its pronouncements on *hindutva*. The BJP does not have an all-India spread, while the Congress has consistently opposed regionalism and championed nationalism of a different kind. During the 1998 state assembly elections, Congress campaign posters proclaimed this quote from Indira Gandhi: 'The unity of India is due in many ways to the unity and strength of the Congress.'

In fact, it is possible to argue that this national identity that Brass refers to is pan-Indian mainly because it has also been espoused by practically all the single state and multi-state parties, which accounted for 40.5 per cent of the seats in 1998 and 45.5 per cent in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. It is in this sense a federal nationalism.[3] Table 16.3 demonstrates the growing strength and importance of these parties in relation to the BJP and the Congress.

II

It would be useful at this stage to consider the party configuration that emerged after the 1996 general elections. A defining moment for the BJP was in May 1996 when Atal Behari Vajpayee stood alone for 13 days in the Lok Sabha waiting for parties to join him in the government he had been invited to form. The BJP was quick to draw the lessons of this humiliation, and moved vigorously to forge alliances on a scale unprecedented for a major national party.

[2] Paul Brass, 'Regionalism, Hindu Nationalism and Party Politics in India's Federal System', in Ian Copland and John Rickard (eds), *Federalism: Comparitive Perspective from India and Australia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999) (emphasis supplied).

[3] For instance, the Telugu Desam Party takes pride in being a 'regional party with a national outlook', combining the quest for autonomy with the desire for integration and aggressively pushing the developmental interests of the state.

TABLE 16.3: Seats Won by National and State Parties in the Lok Sabha 1996–9

(in per cent)

Parties	1996	1998	1999
Congress	25.8	26.0	21.0
BJP	29.6	33.5	33.5
Sub total	*55.4*	*59.5*	*54.5*
Other national parties*	18.8	11.8	13.3
Sub total	*74.2*	*71.3*	*67.8*
State parties and others	25.8	28.7	32.2
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*

Source: Election Commission, *Statistical Report on the General Elections, 1996, 1998 and 1999*

N = 543 seats.

* These are essentially multi-state parties which satisfy the Election Commission's criteria of recognition in at least four states. After each election, their eligibility is reviewed by the Election Commission and some drop to the category of state parties. The parties included in this category are (a) 1996 = CPM, CPI, Samata, Janata Dal, AIIC (Tiwari), and Janata Party; (b) 1998 = CPM, CPI, Samata, Janata Dal, and BSP; (c) 1999 = CPM, CPI, BSP, and Janata Dal (United). The Janata Dal (Secular), which also had *ad hoc* national status but one only seat, has been excluded from this category.

The party system then began to comprise broadly two main categories: the coalition-makers consisting of the two main politywide parties on the one hand, and the 'coalitionable' parties, an assortment of multi or single state-based parties on the other. They constitute the pool from which federal coalitions can and must be forged.[4] As Table 16.4 shows, there are significant regional variations in the seats won by the two main politywide parties.

Overall, the fragmentation of parties for reasons which are only sometimes ideological is one of the major developments of the last decade. One of the mainsprings of this fragmentation has been the articulation of state interests by state-based parties. The

[4] I owe the term 'politywide' to Alfred Stepan, and find it preferable to national or even All-India. Non-politywide parties can be of different types. Multi or single state-based parties are variously classified as national or state or unrecognized by the Election Commission, depending upon their territorial spread and past electoral performance. They are all commonly referred to as regional parties.

TABLE 16.4: Zonal Spread of Politywide and State Parties in the 12th and 13th Lok Sabhas (1998–9)

Zones	Seats	Congress %		BJP %		Others %	
	No	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
North and North-western states	245	15.9	17.6	52.3	46.9	31.8	35.5
East and North-eastern states	88	21.6	21.6	10.2	14.8	68.2	63.6
Western states	78	53.9	21.8	32.0	44.9	14.1	33.3
Southern states	132	31.1	26.5	15.1	14.4	53.8	59.1
Grand Total	*543*	*26.0*	*21.0*	*33.5*	*33.5*	*40.5*	*45.5*

Source: Election Commission, *Statistical Report on the General Elections, 1996, 1998, and 1999.* For details of states included under each zone, see Table 16.5.

most notable examples of such parties are the Telugu Desam, the Tamil Nadu Kazhagams, the Shiv Sena, and the Akali Dal. Even parties like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajawadi Party, which have shown remarkable resilience and have consolidated their position in the 1999 elections, are also primarily focused on the promotion of the interests of their constituents in Uttar Pradesh (UP).

We now turn our attention to the picture that emerged after the fall of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress government and the elections to the 9th Lok Sabha (1989). Since then, there have been five occasions (during the 10th, 11th, and 12th Lok Sabhas) when minority situations have been resolved by either minority governments or minority coalition governments[5] (see Box 16.1)

BOX 16.1

- 4 December 1989–10 November 1990: the National Front minority coalition government headed by V. P. Singh, with external support from the Left Front and the BJP.
- 10 November 1990–21 June 1991: the Chandra Shekhar government with outside support from the Congress, following the withdrawal of support by the BJP to the National Front.
- 21 June 1991–28 July 1993–31 December 1993: the P. V. Narasimha Rao (Congress) minority government, which first survived a no-confidence motion under peculiar circumstances and then succeeded in fabricating a majority.[6]
- 1 June 1996–21 April 1997–28 November 1997: the H. D. Deve Gowda and I. K. Gujral United Front minority coalition governments, both with Congress support. Mr Gujral continued as caretaker prime minister till 18 march 1998.
- 19 March 1998–17 April 1999: the BJP-led minority coalition, with outside support from the Telugu Desam, the Trinamool Congress, and others. Mr Vajpayee continued as caretaker prime minister till 12 October 1999.

[5] Cf. E. Sridharan, 'Principles, Power and Coalition Politics in India: Lessons from Theory, Comparison and Recent History', in D. D. Khanna and Gert W. Kueck (eds), *Principles, Power and Politics* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1999) and V. A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay Mehra, *The Indian Cabinet* (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research and Konark, 1996).

[6] The motion of no-confidence was defeated by 265 votes to 251 votes, with the help of some Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Janata Dal (Ajit) members of

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee which was sworn in on 13 October 1999 marked a departure from the trend outlined above in two significant ways. It was the first time since the end of the Indira Gandhi–Rajiv Gandhi phase that a pre-electoral alliance obtained a clear majority and an incumbent prime minister was returned to office. The 1999 Lok Sabha elections marked a significant break in the succession of hung Parliaments. State parties, aggressively pursuing the developmental interests of their respective states, joined hands with the BJP after the dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha in an alliance which marked the advent of 'electoral federalism'.[7] Through skilful bargaining and seat sharing, the BJP managed to penetrate into areas which had hitherto resisted its efforts at expansion. While the 1998 majority was hastily cobbled together, with all its consequent uncertainties and weaknesses, the preparation for the 1999 elections was taken up more systematically. For the first time, a major national party pursued a comprehensive strategy of alliances and seat-sharing arrangements, accepting to field fewer candidates in the bargain.[8] Reviewing its strategy after the elections, the BJP National Executive noted with satisfaction that the decision to align with non-Congress regional parties had strengthened the federal character of the national polity by making them important partners in the task of governance at the national level and proclaimed: 'This will enable the union government to address regional aspirations more effectively and thus prepare India for the challenges of the new century.'

Table 16.5 analyses the position of the BJP and its allies in the states in the 13th Lok Sabha. Apart from the few states where it confronts the Congress directly on its own strength Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, and Himachal Pradesh), it has

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Parliament. The government, however, lost its minority character only in December 1993 when some of these legislators were formally admitted into the Congress party. For further details, see the Supreme Court judgement of 17 April 1998 in the case of P. V. Narasimha Rao vs State (CBI/SPE) in *SCALE*, vol. 3, 1998, pp. 53–152.

[7] On the political calculations that link different levels of government through the electoral process, see Balveer Arora, 'Electoral Federalism: New Coalitions in the Party System' (forthcoming).

[8] The BJP fielded 340 candidates in the 1999 elections as compared to 384 in 1998 and 471 in 1996.

TABLE 16.5: State-wise Distribution of Seats in the 13th Lok Sabha 1999

Zones/States	Seats	INC	BJP	Other	Details of other parties
Zone 1: 245 seats: North and North-west [8 states + Delhi NCT + Chandigarh UT]					
1. Uttar Pradesh	85	10	29	46	Samajwadi P 26/BSP 14/R Lok Dal 02/ *Loktantrik Cong. 02/Independent 01 (Maneka Gandhi)/* SJPR 01 (Chandra Shekhar)
2. Bihar	54	04	23	27	*JD (U) 18*/RJD 07/CPM 01/*Ind 01*
3. Madhya Pradesh	40	11	29	00	00
4- Rajasthan	25	09	16	00	00
5. Punjab + Chandigarh	14	09	01	04	*SAD 02*/CPI 01/SAD (Man) 01
6. Haryana	10	00	05	05	*IN Lok Dal* 05
7. Delhi NCT	07	00	07	00	00
8. Jammu & Kashmir	06	00	02	04	*J&K National Conference 04*
9. Himachal Pradesh	04	00	03	01	*Himachal Vikas Cong. 01*
Total North and N-West	*245*	*43*	*115*	*87*	*NDA Members & Allies 34*
Zonal Percentage	*100*	*17.6*	*46.9*	*35.5*	*NDA Members & Allies 13.9 per cent*

(Contd.)

TABLE 16.5 contd.

Zones/States	Seats	INC	BJP	Other	Details of other parties
Zone II: 88 seats: East and North-east (10 states)					
1. West Bengal	42	03	02	37	CPM 21/CPI 03/RSP 03/FB 02/ *Trinamool Cong.* 08
2. Orissa	21	02	09	10	*Biju Janata Dal* 10
3. Assam	14	10	02	02	CPI (ML) 01/*Bodo SMC 01*
4. Seven North-east states	11	04	00	07	CPM 02/NCP 02/*MSCP 01/SDF 01/* Independent 01
Total East and North-east	*88*	*19*	*13*	*56*	*NDA Members & Allies 21*
Zonal Percentage	*100*	*21.6*	*14.8*	*63.6*	*NDA Members & Allies 23.9 per cent*
Zone III: 78 seats: West (3 states + 2 UTs)					
1. Maharashtra	48	10	13	25	*Shiv Sena* 15/NCP 06/PWP 01/JDS 01/ BBM 01/Independent 01
2. Gujarat + Daman & Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli	28	07	20	01	Independent 01
3. Goa	02	00	02	00	00
Total West	*78*	*17*	*35*	*26*	*NDA Members & Allies 15*
Zonal Percentage	*100*	*21.8*	*44.9*	*33.3*	*NDA Members & Allies 19.2 per cent*

(Contd.)

TABLE 16.5 contd.

Zones/States	Seats	INC	BJP	Other	Details of other parties
Zone IV: 132 seats: South (4 states + 3 UTs)					
1. Andhra Pradesh	42	05	07	30	*TDP* 29/MIM 01
2. Tamil Nadu + Pondicherry	40	03	04	33	*DMK 12/PMK 01/MDMK 03/MGRDMK 01/* ADMK 11/CPM 01
3. Karnataka	28	18	07	03	*Janata Dal (United) 03*
4. Kerala	20	08	00	12	CPM 08/IUML 02/KEC(M) 01/KEC 01
5. Lakshadweep + Andaman & Nicobar Islands	02	01	01	00	00
Total South	*132*	*35*	*19*	*78*	*NDA Members & Allies 53*
Zonal percentage	*100*	*26.5*	*14.4*	*59.1*	*NDA Members & Allies 40.2 per cent*
Cumulative totals					
Total seats	*543*	*114*	*182*	*247*	*NDA Members & Allies 123*
Total percentage	*100*	*21.0*	*33.5*	*45.5*	*NDA Members & Allies 22.7 per cent*

Source: Compiled from Election Commission data available at www.eci.gov.in, supplemented by media reports for information on alliances and support details. UT= Union Territory and NCT= National Capital Territory.

Notes: (a) In details of other parties, members of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and other BJP allies are indicated in italics. (b) The states of the North-east are: Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Arunachal (2 seats each) and Nagaland, Mizoram, and Sikkim (1 seat each). Sikkim, though not truly a north-eastern state, is clubbed with them here by stretching the concept of geographical contiguity.

electorally significant alliances in virtually all the other states, barring a few exceptions in the North-East. These allies contribute as many as 123 supporters of the Vajpayee government, and account for nearly 23 per cent of the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha.

The other remarkable feature that emerges from Table 16.5 is the preponderance of the allies in the East, North-East and South, where the BJP's score remains poor even though it has made some progress in terms of organizational implantation. In states like Bihar and Orissa, its performance reflects a growing assertiveness based on significant groundwork by dedicated cadres.

Recent experience with multi-party coalition politics has brought to the fore a number of new problems which are not always satisfactorily resolved by reference to classical parliamentary norms evolved in systems which have little or no experience of coalition governments. One such area is the doctrine of collective responsibility of the Cabinet. There have been instances where junior ministers have disclaimed responsibility for decisions taken at meetings they did not attend, or were not entitled to attend because of their rank. Similarly, junior ministers have disowned and criticized decisions taken by cabinet ministers having overall responsibility for the ministry, on the grounds that they were not officially consulted in the matter. As a point of comparison, the British guidelines for the conduct of government affairs in this area are quite explicit:

> The internal process through which a decision has been made, or the level of Committee by which it was taken, should not be disclosed. Decisions reached by the Cabinet or Ministerial Committees are binding on all members of the Government. They are, however, normally announced and explained as the decision of the Minister concerned.... Collective Responsibility requires that Ministers should be able to express their views frankly in the expectation that they can argue freely in private while maintaining a united front when decisions have been reached. This in turn requires that the privacy of opinions expressed in Cabinet and Ministerial committees should be maintained.[9]

[9] Cabinet Office, London, *Questions of Procedure for Ministers*, paras 17 and 18. This compilation of notes detailing the arrangements for the conduct of affairs are issued to all Ministers and was communicated by the Cabinet Office in July 1996.

It is precisely this frank expression of views and free private argument which are often not obtainable in coalition settings. What is the way out? The experience with co-ordination committees has not been very impressive. The culture of coalitions is in its essence a culture of compromise. It is based to a large extent on the sharing of elective and non-elective offices. In order to put an end to these power-sharing arrangements, it is being suggested in some quarters today that the parliamentary system is not an appropriate vehicle for achieving good governance. On the other hand, Arend Lijphart offers ample empirical evidence to demonstrate that 'non-majoritarian decision-making mechanisms that restrain majority rule by sharing, dispersing, delegating and limiting power are more suitable for plural societies than are mechanisms that concentrate power in the hands of the political majority'.[10] The arguments presented in this paper are premised on the belief that the strength and vitality of India's political system owe a great deal to its continued development as a *federal* democracy, as evidenced by its vibrant party system. In the trade-off between governmental stability and federal governance, it is important to remember that attempts at fabricating artificially homogenized majorities are more likely, in the long run, to be the causes of more profound instabilities.

III

Two major demands arose during the period of 'stable' Congress rule during the 1980s, as state-based parties grew from strength to strength. The consolidation of the non-Congress alternative was made possible by the electoral mobilization around these two themes. The first was the demand for less central intervention in the affairs of the states, and the second was the plea for more states' participation in national governance. In this section, we look at these two demands successively through the persistent campaign waged by state-based parties against president's rule on the one hand, and in favour of an effective Inter-State Council on the other.

[10] Arend Lijphart, Ronald Rogowski, and R. Kent Weaver, 'Separation of Powers and Cleavage Management', in R. Kent Weaver and Bert A. Rockman (eds), *Do Institutions Matter?* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993).

Insofar as President's Rule is concerned, we find ourselves at an interesting juncture: after having been used 100 times over 50 years, it is remarkable that there is no state under President's Rule today. It would be perhaps appropriate to seriously consider the abolition of Article 356 *in its present form*.

The central argument presented here is that the legacy of misuse and abuse of powers conferred under Article 356 is so overwhelming that the provision itself has become tainted beyond redemption. While the original intent was no doubt laudable, it has become well-nigh impossible to distill and salvage it at this point of time from successive layers of bad precedents which have gravely obscured its 'creative potential'.[11] It has been the single most corrupting influence on state governors and has thereby damaged that office. It is further argued that this possibility of central intervention for a variety of dubious and often partisan reasons has hampered rather than promoted stable state-level party systems. For all these reasons, the repeal of Article 356 should form part of a three-pronged effort to restore the ethical foundations of the party system and the political process. In effect, precluding central manipulation of state politics deserves the same level of priority as reforming the anti-defection law and debarring criminals from the legislative arena.

The legacy of persistent misuse and abuse has been amply documented for the period 1967–87, during which Article 356 was invoked 75 times, in the Sarkaria Commission Report. The root of the problem lies in the manner in which the asset of an inherently flexible federal arrangement was squandered away by being used to strengthen the processes of exclusion, rather than those of inclusion and accommodation.[12] While there is a noticeable decline in the number of cases of President's Rule since 1985, the problem of misuse persists.[13] As Table 16.6 shows, there are more cases of its use under stable single-party governments than under coalitions comprising regional parties.

[11] James Manon, 'Regional Parties in Federal Systems', in Balveer Arora and Douglas V. Verney (eds), *Multiple Indentities in a Single State: Indian Federalism in a Comparative Perspective* (Delhi: Konark, 1995).

[12] Nirmal Mukarji and Balveer Arora (eds), *Federalism in India: Origins and Development* (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research and Vikas, 1992).

[13] During the 1999 election campaign, Vajpayee spoke out against Article 356 on at least two occasions, in Andhra and in Punjab.

TABLE 16.6: Cases of President's Rule under Article 356 (1985–99)

S. No.	State	Proclamation	Revocation	Prime Ministers
74	Jammu & Kashmir	07.09.86	07.11.86	Rajiv Gandhi
75	Punjab	11.05.87	25.02.92	–do–
76	Tamil Nadu	30.01.88	27.01.89	–do–
77	Nagaland	07.08.88	25.01.89	–do–
78	Mizoram	07.09.88	24.01.89	–do–
79	Karnataka	21.04.89	30.11.89	–do–
80	Jammu & Kashmir	18.07.90	09.10.96	V. P. Singh
81	Karnataka	10.10.90	17.10.90	–do–
82	Assam	27.11.90	30.06.91	S. Chandrashekhar
83	Goa	14.12.90	25.01.91	–do–
84	Tamil Nadu	30.01.91	24.06.91	–do–
85	Haryana	06.04.91	23.06.91	–do–
86	Meghalaya	11.10.91	05.02.92	P. V. Narasimha Rao
87	Manipur	06.01.92	08.04.92	–do–
88	Nagaland	02.04.92	22.02.93	–do–
89	Uttar Pradesh	06.12.92	04.12.93	–do–
90	Himachal Pradesh	15.12.92	03.12.93	–do–
91	Madhya Pradesh	15.12.92	07.12.93	–do–
92	Rajasthan	15.12.92	04.12.93	–do–
93	Tripura	11.03.93	10.04.93	–do–
94	Manipur	31.12.93	13.12.94	–do–
95	Bihar	28.03.95	04.04.95	–do–
96	Uttar Pradesh	18.10.95	17.10.96	–do–
97	Uttar Pradesh	17.10.96	21.03.97	H. D. Deve Gowda
98	Gujarat	19.09.96	23.10.96	–do–
99	Goa	10.02.99	04.06.99	A. B. Vajpayee
100	Bihar	12.02.99	08.03.99	–do–

Sources: (1) For the first 75 cases between 1951 and 1987, see Sarkaria Commission, *Report on Centre–state Relationship*, 1988, vol. 1, pp. 185–6; (2) For the subsequent period, see Lok Sabha Secretariat, *President's Rule in the States and Union Territories* (New Delhi: LARRDIS, 1996), 6th edn, supplemented by media reports. This document lists only 72 cases for the period covered by the Sarkaria Commission, compressing multiple proclamations in two cases (Orissa and Bihar). We have adopted the numbering of the Sarkaria Commission here and extended it to cover the subsequent period.

It is clear from Table 16.6 that the progressive decline in the use of President's Rule coincides with the advent of coalition governments and the participation of state parties opposed to

Article 356 in national governance. To consolidate this gain for federal democracy, it is important to seriously examine the proposals for stringent safeguards against the misuse of Article 356, if not its outright abolition.

It is undeniable that the concept itself has been greatly impoverished through persistent misuse. The Sarkaria Commission recommendations have been largely ignored and sometimes blatantly flouted in many of the twenty-five cases during the period 1988–99. The most recent attempt to persist on this trajectory were the United Front government's recommendation on UP in October 1997 and the Vajpayee government's recommendation on Bihar, both of which were reconsidered and withdrawn or not resubmitted at the behest of the President of India. The Bommai judgement has made a difference in terms of injecting salutary restraint, but apparently it has not been enough to deter attempts at misuse. The judgement itself was ambivalent in many ways, and was pronounced by a bare majority. Moreover, it offers only *ex post facto* remedies which may not always be able to undo the damage.

It is argued here that this interventionist temptation does not prevent but rather promotes political instability. Cobbling coalitions under the central umbrella introduces an artificial tilt-in the state party system which hinders the emergence of stable equations because of the mere existence of this unfair advantage to certain players. In recurring situations of split party control between levels of government, it is imperative to disengage the different power struggle arenas.

Various safeguards have been suggested by the Sarkaria Commission against further misuse, such as defining improper/illegal use and devising more effective checks. These include tighter parliamentary control, a bar on assembly dissolution pending approval, and extending statutory precautions *à la* Article 352. The commission rightly rejected central take-over as a means of achieving 'good governance' by ruling that maladministration and corruption charges were insufficient grounds, and that Article 356 cannot be used for combating corruption. By the same token, it is difficult to support the suggestion of the chief election commissioner, Mr M. S. Gill, that 'Article 356 should be amended by Parliament to provide for an elected state government to move out of office once the elections are announced so that the state

could be placed under governor's rule'.[14] The tenacious belief in the political neutrality of president's rule flies in the face of all available evidence. Leaving aside the question of who is appointed as governor and why, it is crystal clear that governors work under the overall control of the union government, acting primarily through the home ministry. The political choices and preferences of the party in power at the Centre inevitably become determining influences in the governance of the state.

A political consensus on reforming Article 356 has so far proved elusive. While some degree of agreement was reached at the July 1997 meetings of the Inter-State Council (ISC) and its sub-committee, which discussed the Sarkaria Commission safeguards against misuse of Article 356, the lack of a consensus was all too apparent. Majoritarian centralist parties hoping to establish or re-establish single party control over the central and state governments are loathe to part with such a potent weapon for asserting supremacy. It is noteworthy that the two states now most forcefully advocating the abolition of Article 356 are ironically the same two states whose proclamations were ratified by overwhelming majorities in Parliament time and again. Punjab and Kashmir were two states on which there was a wide-ranging political consensus that the use of this provision had strong justification. However, the situation in these two states arguably stabilized *not during* President's Rule, but *after* it was lifted and the political process restored.

The safeguards against misuse hang by slender threads which could vanish under different circumstances. Judicial oversight is certainly necessary, but it is not sufficient. Judicial scrutiny might not work as a deterrent when the grounds themselves for invoking Article 356 are ill-defined and contentious in essence. Reliance on the president to check attempts at misuse is equally fraught with uncertainties, as incumbents have interpreted their powers and functions very differently in the past. The analysis of cases during the period 1988–99, prolonging the Sarkaria Commission classification criteria and checking for respect or flouting of recommendations, confirms this.

[14] Cited in *The Hindu*, 26 August 1998. In the interim, he suggested that the chief ministers of four states due to go to the polls in November should become 'tyagmurthis' and voluntarily relinquish office six weeks before the elections to enable 'a neutral administration under the Governors to be in place (for the) conduct of free and fair elections'.

Since a political consensus in favour of the constitutional amendment necessary to repeal Article 356 is some way off, it would perhaps be advisable to simultaneously explore two interim measures which would bring some relief.

Codifying the Sarkaria Commission Safeguards

The discussions on safeguards in the ISC standing committee meeting of 8 July 1997, followed by the meeting of the full council on 17 July 1997, revealed a limited consensus on the issuance of a prior warning and speedy approval by Parliament. However, the insistence upon a report from the governor as the primary basis for the decision to impose central rule needs to be reconsidered. While this provision made some sense when the Centre had few other channels of information, today's decisions need no longer wait for, nor rely ostensibly upon, the governor's report. The would have the additional advantage of contributing towards depoliticizing the office of the governor to some extent.

Inter-State Council Monitoring

In addition to tighter parliamentary control and wide-ranging judicial scrutiny, it would be advisable to assign an advisory monitoring role to the ISC standing committee. If meetings are held at regular intervals as provided, the views of the ISC would be available to the Parliament when it debates ratification and clears the way for dissolution of the assembly. However, as things stand, the council is wholly dependent on the prime minister's decision on whether to convene it or not. The periodicity mentioned in the Order which established it has not been observed, and the full council has met at irregular intervals.[15] We discuss below the importance of rethinking the Inter-State Council for the stabilization of the party system and its response to the long-standing demand of regional parties for more effective participation in national governance.

[15] The second meeting of the full council finally took place on 17 July 1997 after a gap of almost seven years. The full council met again in January 1999, but failed to arrive at a consensus on the vexed issue of safeguards against the misuse of Article 356. See the Inter-State Council, Implemention Report on the *Sarkaria Commission's Recommendations*, September 2000.

We now turn our attention to the second element of institutional reform, viz. a re-invented Inter-State Council. As we noted earlier, one of the enduring legacies of single-party majority rule has been the reluctance to institutionalize independent offices, and the weight of this legacy was sufficiently powerful when the V. P. Singh government set up the Inter-State Council in May 1990. Even at that time, apprehensions were expressed about the soundness of the structure being proposed. These apprehensions, which concerned mainly its capacity to act independently and take up issues on merit, have been unfortunately confirmed by the irregular and sporadic way in which it has functioned over the past decade. The post of secretary to the council has been reduced to a '*voie de garage*', a convenient parking slot for secretaries caught on the wrong foot in bureaucratic reshuffles and awaiting a more suitable assignment. As a result, there have arguably been more secretaries than there have been meetings of the council![16]

Further, it was clear from the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission that the mode of functioning prescribed for the inter-governmental council would reduce it to an appendage of the central government, with the prime minister in sole charge. This apprehension was articulated by Nirmal Mukarji at the time as follows:

> The Commission has rightly recommended that the Council should have an independent permanent secretariat, because that would ensure that papers for discussion are prepared on the basis of impartial and objective research. But the Commission has erred in recommending that the Secretariat should be modelled on the Union Cabinet Secretariat, for that is neither independent nor research-based.... The head of the Council Secretariat will need to interact, on the one hand, with the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers and, on the other, with the chairman and secretaries of Zonal Councils, should these be set up. He would therefore have to be a sort of secretary-general. His selection would have to be by consensus so that he is acceptable cutting across party

[16] For details of this functioning, see Balveer Arora, 'India's Federal System and the Demands of Pluralism: Crisis and Reform in the Eighties', in J. Chaudhuri (ed.), *India's Beleaguered Federalism: The Pluralist Challenge* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University Press, 1992) pp. 14–15 and Arora and Verney (eds), *Multiple Identities in a Single State*, pp. 76–7.

boundaries, and his tenure and terms of appointment protected constitutionally, so that he can function fearlessly.[17]

While there is an influential body of opinion which feels that the council is ineffectual beyond redemption, and that trying to reform it is akin to flogging a dead horse, we are taking here a contrary position. The council represents a positive, though inadequate, achievement in the struggle to make India's political institutions more reflective of its federal character. The reasons why it is comatose today are similar to those which made it inactive and ineffectual during 1991–6, namely the aversion of centralist parties to institutionalizing the federal elements of the polity, in the belief that they may just disappear by themselves when there is a return to single-party majority rule.

With coalitions becoming a recurrent feature of Indian politics, it can be argued that there *is* need for a new type of Inter-State Council, an independent statutory body cast in a different mould. Even if the council's opinion remains advisory, its consultative status, if taken seriously, could make a difference. The process of consultation has been judicially defined as follows: 'Consultation is not complete or effective before the parties thereto make their respective points of view known to the other (or others) and discuss and examine the relative merits of their views.'[18] Effective consultation of the states would go a long way in removing many of the weaknesses in the present framework of national governance, which is derived from a centralist perspective. Prior consultation would necessarily be limited, but should be resorted to whenever feasible. *Ex post facto* consultation has also a beneficial effect, as it generates participation and feedback on the national consensus. This is often obscured by the disproportionate importance that the views of some states or parties acquire, merely because they are pivotal members of coalitions.

It is self-evident that the Union government and Parliament would retain their powers and jurisdictions, but they would be

[17] Nirmal Mukarji and Balveer Arora 'Restructuring Federal Democracy' in Nirmal Mukarji and Balveer Arora (eds), *Federalism in India: Origins and Development* (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research and Vikas, 1992), pp. 275–6. These observations were made in June 1988, before the Inter-State Council was actually established.

[18] Rajeev Dhawan, 'Crisis in the Judiciary', *The Hindu*, 14 August 1998.

tempered by a process of federal consultation. Mandatory regular meetings and a more proactive role could arguably stabilize coalitions which are torn between conflicting pressures. The United Front governments headed by H. D. Deve Gowda and I. K. Gujral were not immune to such internal tensions and contradictions, even though they took the council more seriously than their predecessors. For instance, the recommendation to the president for imposition of Article 356 in Uttar Pradesh was forwarded despite its dubious justification. It was the president who demurred and thereby saved the day for a government that was committed, in principle, to curbing unwarranted central intervention in the governance of the states.[19]

Finally, such a proactive council is also needed to keep states involved in major national policy decisions which may technically fall within the competence and legal jurisdiction of the central government but which have far-reaching repercussions for the states. This argument was powerfully advanced by S. Guhan[20] concerning the new economic policy launched by the Narasimha Rao government. It is equally applicable to the initiative to conduct nuclear tests by the Vajpayee government: the council can be a very important forum for keeping states informed and thereby involved in national initiatives.

For the council to become effective, it has to redefine its position *vis-à-vis* the union government, which is in any case overrepresented. A key change in this redefinition would be to upgrade the position of the secretary to the council.[21] This initiative

[19] A similar situation arose in September 1998 with regard to the Vajpayee government's recommendation regarding the imposition of President's Rule in Bihar.

[20] S. Guhan, 'Centre and States in the Reform Process', in Robert Cassen and Vijay Joshi (eds), *India: The Future of Economic Reform* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[21] The Inter-State Council Order is a government notification published in the Gazette of India, dated 28 May 1990. It should be headed by a secretary general who should have a status equivalent to that of a Supreme Court judge. He should be designated through a special procedure, for a fixed tenure and not removable, except according to the procedure applicable for the judges of the Supreme Court, the Election Commissioners, and the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Chief ministers designated by the Inter-State Council should ideally be associated with his appointment. But till this mechanism is

would go a long way towards giving it a much needed distance and freedom from the central government, and help it to become more equidistant between the Centre and the states. The ultimate aim should be to endow the Inter-State Council with competencies and powers befitting an apex federal body which would respond to the demand of the states for greater participation in national policy-making.

IV

In this concluding section, we turn our attention briefly to a few of the issues raised in the debate on electoral reform which have a direct bearing on the very nature of the party system. Broadly, reforms fall in two categories. The first category is concerned with making the electoral system function more efficiently, cleanly, and equitably. The concern for a level playing field, curbing misuse of incumbency advantages and money power, fall within this category and are beyond the scope of this paper. The second category of reforms concern the rules of the game which regulate representation, and seek to curb the proliferation of parties through various methods such as more stringent recognition criteria and other disincentives for small parties. The underlying assumption is that India is becoming ungovernable because of their existence. This assumption is highly questionable.

This view ignores the close link between political parties and the social realities that they reflect. It ignores the size and diversity of the Indian electorate in its concern for 'manageability' of the electoral process. Attempts to artificially restrict the number of parties and thereby regulate participation have never really succeeded anywhere. They have generally been counter-productive in the long run.

Based on the somewhat mind-boggling raw data on the number of parties and candidates put out by the Election Commission, it

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worked out, the innovation made for the appointment of the Chief Vigilance Commissioner could profitably be adopted here, viz. a three-member committee comprising the prime minister, the home minister, and the leader of the opposition. This change does not require a constitutional amendment and can be effected through a modification of the Order which set up the Inter State Council.

is often argued that additional filters are required to weed out the small players. In fact, as Table 16.7 shows only 17 parties obtained more than one per cent of the Lok Sabha seats in the past three general elections. It is apparent that the number of parties which actually play a significant role is much less than what appears at first sight, and the problem of manageability is largely overstated.

TABLE 16.7: Trends in the Performance of Major Single-State and Multi-State Parties*

S. no.	Party election	1996	1998	1999
1.	CPI(Marxist)	32	32	33
2.	CPI	12	09	04
3.	Janata Dal	46	06	@
4.	Rashtriya Janata Dal	#	17	07
5.	Biju Janata Dal	#	09	10
6.	Lok Shakthi	#	03	@
7.	Samata Party @/JD(U)	08	12	21
8.	Samajwadi Party	17	20	26
9.	Bahujan Samaj Party	11	04	14
10.	Shiromani Akali Dal	08	08	02
11.	Trinamool Congress	**	07	08
12.	Nationalist Congress Party	**	**	08
13.	Telugu Desam Party	16	12	29
14.	Shiv Sena	15	06	15
15.	ADMK	00	18	11
16.	DMK	17	06	12
17.	Tamil Maanila Congress	20	03	00

Source: Election Commission of India, *General Elections 1996, 1998, 1999: Seats won by Parties in States/Union Territories.*

* Parties which obtained a minimum of six seats (that is, over one per cent of the seats) in *any* of the three Lok Sabha elections have been listed here. Two important regional parties are missing from this list—Asom Gana Parishad and the J&K National Conference—both of them having failed to reach the threshold we have adopted.

** Broke away from the Indian National Congress

Broke away from the Janata Dal

@ Contested as Janata Dal (United) in the 1999 elections. The JD(U) tally in the 1999 elections is shown against the Samata Party, the dominant component of this new entity which is yet to formalize the merger. The other faction of the Janata Dal, the JD(S) won only one seat in Maharashtra.

What remains is the size of the ballot paper and the costs incurred: these objections, would largely be met as the use of electronic voting machines becomes generalized.

The second dimension of reform which has attracted some attention concerns the regulation of the internal functioning of parties through the Election Commission and their functioning in Parliament through changes in the rules of procedure which govern them. Take for instance the question of ensuring inner party democracy and auditing the accounts of parties. Both these measures have been widely endorsed but remain ineffective in their application. They deserve to be taken more seriously through appropriate legislation. In the sphere of rules of procedure, the method of withdrawing confidence from a government appears to be the most important. When the Fifth French Republic under Prime Minister Michel Debre (1958–62) undertook the task of rationalizing the functioning of Parliament, regulating the frequency and mode of counting of the majority were major agenda items. The onus of proving the loss of majority was henceforth placed on the opposition, which had to muster the requisite number to unseat the government. Those who were absent or abstained were thus counted automatically in favour of the government, which was assumed to have the majority unless a demonstration to the contrary was made on the floor of the House.

The Law Commission, in its report on 'Reform of Electoral Laws', has made a number of proposals which seek to bar defections and regulate confidence motions, 'in an effort to arrest and reverse the process of proliferation and splintering of political parties, and to introduce stability in the country's governance'.[22] The most significant from our point of view is its endorsement of the German practice of the so-called 'constructive no-confidence vote' which involves designating an alternative prime minister while voting out an incumbent from office.

We now turn our attention to an analysis of some significant dimensions of the majority that emerged from the 1999 Lok Sabha elections which help us in understanding the emergence of new

[22] *The Hindu*, 21 September 1999. On the 170th Report of the 15th Law Commission, see B. P. Jeevan Reddy, 'Reforming the Electoral Law', ibid., 9 and 10 August 99. For a critique, see Rajeev Dhavan, 'The Law Commission and Poll Reform', ibid., 10 September 1999.

coalitions in what is now a veritable multi-party democracy. Table 16.8 shows the relative strengths and weaknesses of the BJP and its alliance partners in different parts of the country.

Another significant dimension of BJP's performance in the last three elections is its steadily increasing share in the seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes. This performance has to be viewed in the context of surveys which indicate a widening of its support base in new directions and against the backdrop of rising communal tensions in the tribal belt of central India, stretching from Gujarat through Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar to Orissa.[23]

TABLE 16.8: Distribution of Seats between the BJP and Allies in 13th Lok Sabha (1999)

States/Zones	Seats	BJP		Allies	
	No.	Seats	per cent	Seats	per cent
North & North-western states	245	115	46.9	34	13.9
East & North-eastern states	88	13	14.8	21	23.9
Western states	78	35	44.9	15	19.2
Southern states	132	19	14.4	53	40.2
Grand Total	543	182	33.5	123	22.7

Source: Same as Table 16.2.

TABLE 16.9: BJP's Performance in Reserved Seats in Three Lok Sabhas

Reserved Seats (120)	1996	1998	1999
Scheduled Castes (79)	30	24	25
Scheduled Tribes (41)	11	14	21

Source: Same as Table 16.7.

Finally, if one looks at the representation of parties in the union council of ministers constituted by Mr Vajpayee, 18 of the 29 cabinet ministers and 32 of the 45 ministers of state are drawn from the ranks of the BJP, that is, 50 of the 74 ministers. Ten allied parties are represented in the government, with a total tally of 11

[23] These five states account for 28 of the 41 seats (that is, 68 per cent) reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha. See the Economist–CSDS survey: 'How India Voted', *The Economist*, 16 October 1999, pp. 33–5.

cabinet ministers and 13 ministers of state.[24] Turning to regional representation, 13 states are represented by cabinet ministers while five others have ministers of states in the government.

A few aspects of this unprecedented power-sharing arrangement need to be noted. Firstly, the BJP has not handed over the representation of any state exclusively to its allies, barring the

TABLE 16.10: Representation of States in the Union Council of Ministers 1999

S. no.	State	BJP		Allies		Total
		Cabinet	M.O.S.*	Cabinet	M.O.S.*	
1.	Bihar	02	05	04	01	12
2.	Tamil Nadu	01	00	02	05	08
3.	Maharashtra	03	02	02	01	08
4.	Madhya Pradesh	02	06	00	00	08
5.	Uttar Pradesh	03	03	00	01	07
6.	Gujarat	02	02	00	00	04
7.	Orissa	01	01	01	01	04
8.	Rajasthan	01	03	00	00	04
9.	West Bengal	00	01	01	01	03
10.	Karnataka	01	01	00	01	03
11.	Delhi	01	02	00	00	03
12.	Punjab	00	00	01	00	01
13.	Himachal Pradesh	01	00	00	00	01
	Sub Total	*18*	*26*	*11*	*11*	*66*
14.	Andhra Pradesh	00	03	00	00	03
15.	Jammu & Kashmir	00	01	00	01	02
16.	Assam	00	01	00	00	01
17.	Haryana	00	01	00	00	01
18.	Manipur	00	00	00	01	01
	Total	*18*	*32*	*11*	*13*	*74*

Source: Compiled from Lok Sabha Election Results, Rajya Sabha, '*Who's Who*', and media reports.

* M.O.S.: Minister of State

[24] Of these, the JD(U) has the lion's share (six posts); followed by the DMK and the Shiv Sena (three each); MDMK, PMK, Trinamool Congress, and BJD (two each); and SAD, JKNC, MSCP, and Maneka Gandhi (one each). Of the seven allies not represented in the government but extending support from outside, the main ones are the Telugu Desam (Andhra) and the Lok Dal (Haryana).

special cases of Punjab and Manipur. It has ensured that its own members of Parliament (MPs) from the state are included in the cabinet, even where it depends heavily on state parties, as in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The states in which allies have chosen to stay out (Andhra Pradesh, Haryana) are nevertheless represented by BJP ministers. Secondly, in the distribution of portfolios, it has ensured the presence of its representatives in all ministries allotted to allies. Thirdly, the ministries that it has not shared with allies *at all* include home affairs, human resource development (including science and technology), power, information technology, information and broadcasting, water resources, surface transport, and tribal affairs.

In conclusion, the mandate of the 1999 Lok Sabha elections lends itself to various interpretations, and it is being interpreted differently by the major players. Prime Minister Vajpayee declares 'Our government is under a popular mandate to initiate far-reaching judicial and administrative reforms'.[25] When he asserts this, he speaks not only for the BJP but also for his alliance partners. However, it is possible to argue that the mandate is not so clear and unambiguous. If at all there is a consensus amongst the allies on the directions of a wide-ranging constitutional review, it would probably be in favour of strengthening federalism. As for the Congress party, it is beset with grave problems of leadership, organization, and strategy. In a post-election review, its Working Committee reaffirmed its continuing faith in a strategy which resulted in its lowest ever seat tally in fifty years, even less than what it obtained in the 1977 post-Emergency electoral consultation.[26]

As the party system moves through successive elections, one fact emerges with clarity: state parties are not a transitory phenomena but are here to stay. Many of them are more than twenty or thirty years old and have proved themselves in governance at the state level. They will continue to demand more participation in national governance.

[25] Speech at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Supreme Court of India, cited in *The Hindu*, 26 November 1999.

[26] 'In keeping with the spirit of Pachmarhi and in contrast to the ruling coalition, the Congress will not have recourse to unstable, unviable, opportunistic alliances united only by the lust for office.' Cited in *The Times of India*, 25 October 1999.

Annotated Bibliography

Political parties have been the dominant agents in the political life of twentieth-century India. To obtain a perspective on political parties, the reader must understand the force and passion with which Indians participate in party politics. No other institution attracts as much public interest and public disapproval as do the activities of political parties and their leaders. The importance of party politics is related to the fact that parties provide the organization for mobilization and participation and the symbols and ideologies for political identification and articulation. Historically, the significance of parties was connected to the central role played by the Congress-led national movement in the life of modern India. The contemporary significance of party politics is linked to the success of Indian democracy. Both the achievements and shortcomings of democracy are ascribed to the party system, consequently, political analysts have focused enormous attention on the challenges posed by parties and party system to democracy.

Any understanding of political parties should begin with a general understanding of the history and politics of modern India. Early writings on Indian government and politics are Norman D. Palmer, *The Indian Political System* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961), Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970) and W. H. Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics of India* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1971) and his *Politics Mainly Indian*, (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978). The recent writings of Kothari are to be found in *Politics and the People: In Search of a Humane India*, 2 vols (Delhi: Ajanta, 1989). The more contemporary overviews of Indian politics are Paul Brass, *Politics in India since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Robert Hardgrave and Stanley A. Kochanek, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*

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A Biography of an Indian Political Party (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969) and Yogendra Malik and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalism in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party* (Delhi: Vistaar Publication, 1994). An authoritative work on the BJP is Christophe Jaffrelot's, *Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics* (Delhi: Viking, 1996). Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) examines the transformation of the broader public space and culture and how this enabled Hindu nationalism to spread its message. The nature and character of Hindu nationalism is discussed in Amrita Basu, 'Mass Movement or Elite Conspiracy'? The Puzzle of Hindu Nationalism', in David Ludden (ed.), *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy* in *India*, (Philadelphia: University of California Press, 1996) and also her article 'The Transformation of Hindu Nationalism? Towards a Reappraisal', and Christophe Jaffrelot's 'Hindu Nationalism and Democracy', in Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava and Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000). For an analysis of the movements, discourses and practices of Hindu nationalism see, Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and an article by Stuart Corbridge, 'The militarization of all Hindudom'? The Bharatiya Janata Party, the bomb, and the political spaces of Hindu nationalism', *Economy and Society*, vol. 28, no. 2, May 1999. The ideology and organization of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliated organizations are discussed in Walter Anderson and Sridhar Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, (Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1987) and Tapan, Basu, P. K. Datta, Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993).

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(Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993). On the changing social base of the BJP see Oliver Heath, 'Anatomy of BJP's Rise to Power: Social, Regional and Political Expansion in the 1990s', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21–8 August 1999 reprinted in this volume.

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Asia (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1977) was concerned with political fragmentation. A few Janata Party leaders have written accounts of the various incarnations of the Janata Party. These are Madhu Limaye, *Janata Experiment* (Delhi: 1994, V. P. Singh, 'The Emergence of Janata Party: A Watershed in Post-Independence Indian Politics' in Surendra Mohan (ed.), *Evolution of Socialist Policy in India* (Delhi: 1997), Madhu Limaye, *Documentary History of the Janata Party* (New Delhi: 1993).

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There are a few studies of state politics and state-based parties. One of the earliest collections was Myron Weiner (ed.), *State Politics in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). A more recent collection that looks at the course of state politics in the 1980s is John Wood (ed.), *State Politics in India* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984). There are also studies of particular parties within specific states such as Angela Sutherland Burger, *Opposition in a Dominant Party System?* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969, Howard Erdman), *The Swatantra Party and Indian*

Conservatism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Baldev Raj Nayar, *Minority Politics in the Punjab* (1966) and the article by Paul Wallace, The Regionalization of Indian Electoral Politics 1989–90: Punjab and Haryana' in Harold Gould and Sumit Ganguly (eds), *India Votes.*

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The interplay of society with democratic structures has been the subject of a large amount of writing some of which is quite useful for understanding India's party politics. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) and Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1970) were important examples of this kind of research. The two volumes edited by Francine Frankel and M. S. A. Rao (eds), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), focused on the interaction of state power with social dominance of caste, class, and ethnicity, see especially the contributions of David Washbroke, Jayant Lele, Ghanshyam Shah, James Manor, Ram Reddy, and Francine Frankel's, 'Conclusion: Decline of a Social Order'. Another collection of essays is C. J. Fuller (ed.), *Caste Today* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), especially the essays by Andre Beteille and Nicholas Dirks and Geoffrey Hawthorn, 'Caste and politics in India since 1947', in D. MacGilvray (ed.), *Caste Ideology and Interaction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). For a discerning analysis of the changing material and behavioral relations of caste, see D. L. Sheth, 'Secularization of Caste and Making of New Middle Class', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21–8 August 1999 and also his earlier article 'Caste and Politics: A Survey of the Literature', *Contributions to South Asian Studies*, 9 (Delhi) vol. 1, 1979.

The political stirrings of lower castes and the organization of political support around caste and community have attracted considerable scholarly interest. See for example, Christophe Jaffrelot,

'The Rise of Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt', *Journal of Asian Studies*, February 2000, Ian Duncan, 'Dalits and Politics in Rural North India: The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, October 1999, Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Bahujan Samaj Party in North India: No Longer Just a Dalit Party', *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1998 and Pradeep Kumar, 'Dalits and the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh: Issues and Challenges', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3 April 1999. For an analysis of attempts to mobilize ethnic blocs by weaving the demands for political and material benefits into the larger narrative of group politics, see Kanchan Chandra, 'The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India: The Decline of the Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur', *Journal of Asian Studies*, February 2000.

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Apart from studies of parties, the literature on democracy provides a necessary context and source for the understanding of modern party politics. These include: Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy*, Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sunil Khilnani, *An Idea of India* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1997); Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1989); Gurpreet Mahajan (ed.), *Democracy, Difference and Social Justice* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Niraja Gopal Jayal (ed.) *Democracy in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). Rajni Kothari's *State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1990)

assembles together his writings on state, democracy and authoritarianism. Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) raises the important question of why there is a difference in the political experience of India and Pakistan. On this question see James Manor, 'How and Why Liberal and Representative Politics Emerged in India', *Political Studies*, vol. 38, 1990. An attempt to take stock of the country's democratic experience and the transformations unleashed by the interaction of liberal ideas and institutions with hierarchical social structures and heterogeneous cultures is attempted in the collection edited by Francine Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava and Balveer Arora (eds), *Transforming India: The Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, especially the papers by Rajeev Bhargava, Sudipta Kaviraj, Yogendra Yadav, and Prabhat Patnaik.

There is a huge and varied literature on elections, some of which is particularly relevant for students of party politics. Primary data on elections that includes constituency-wise and state-wise Lok Sabha results is available in David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy, *India Decides: Elections, 1952–1991* (Delhi: Books and Things, 1995). Another useful compilation of data on Lok Sabha elections and state and constituency level results is V. B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *State Elections in India: Data Handbook on Lok Sabha Elections*, 1952–80 (Delhi: Sage Publications, 1984) and V. B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *State Elections in India: Data Handbook on Lok Sabha Elections*, 1986–94 (Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994).

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post-poll National Election Study 1996, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, see the articles published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 January 1996 and 21–8 August 1999 and Yogendra Yadav, 'Reconfiguration in Indian Politics: State Assembly Elections 1993–5', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 January 1996.

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Zoya Hasan is Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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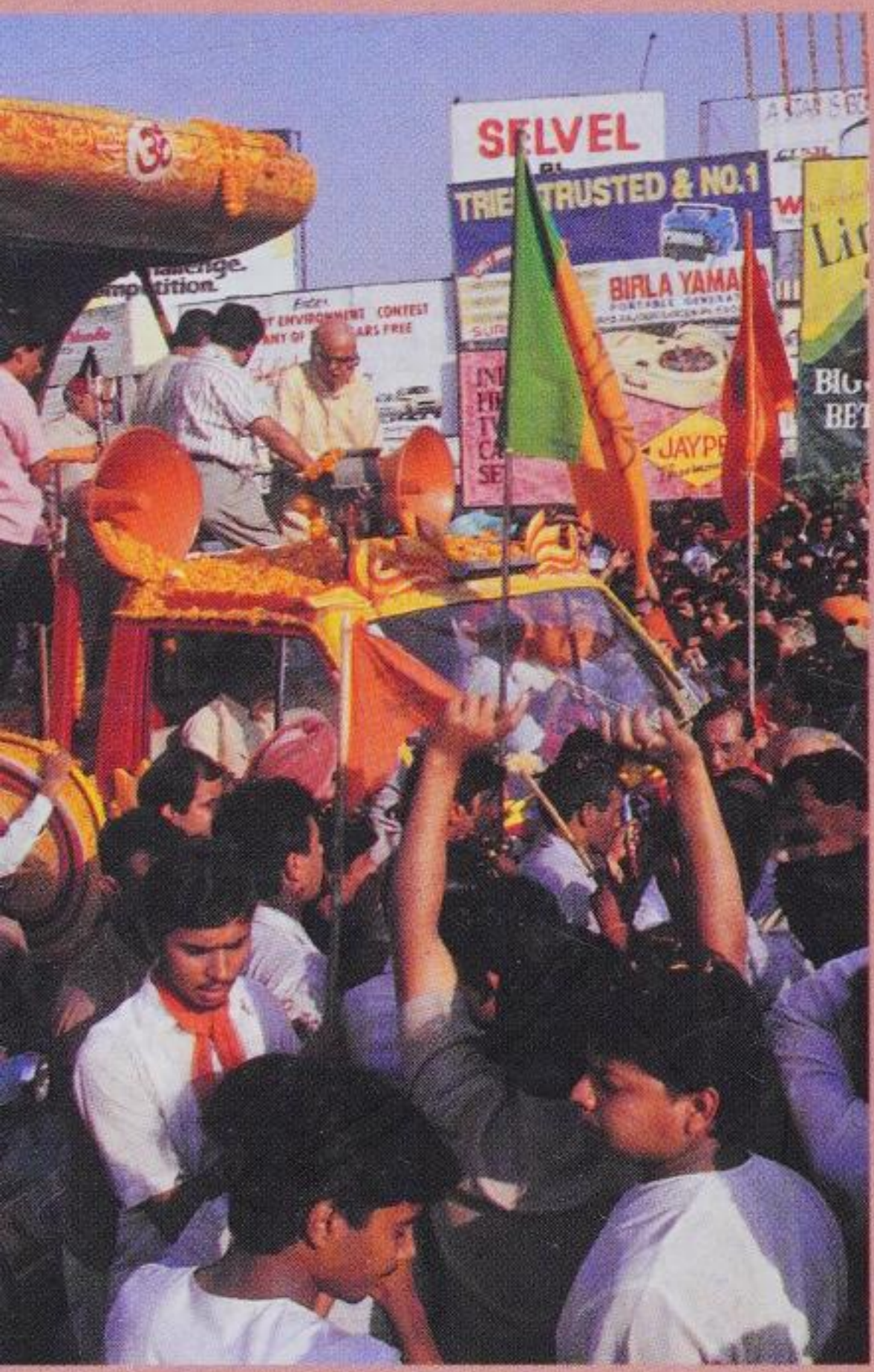

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